



Doing Business in Qatar: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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Chapter 1: Doing Business In Qatar

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Market Overview

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- Qatar's economic performance is expected to remain strong in 2012, despite difficult global economic conditions. Gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to moderate to 6% in 2012 on the back of government spending on large infrastructure projects and increased production in the manufacturing sector. Qatar recorded 19% GDP growth in 2011, rising to \$181.7 billion from approximately \$153 Billion in 2010, largely attributable to sustained high oil and gas prices and increases in LNG production as decades-long expansion plans reached completion. From 2006 – 2011, Qatar's nominal GDP growth averaged 25.44%. The main drivers for this growth can be attributed to general increases in production and exports of LNG, oil, petrochemicals and related industries, barring a slight fall of 15.2% between 2009 and 2010.

During the same period (2004-2011), the non-oil and gas sector's compound annual growth rate was 25.7%. In 2011, the oil and gas sector accounted for over 60% of overall GDP, while the non-oil and gas sector accounted for the remainder of 40%. According to Qatar National Bank, the Per Capita GDP in Qatar is expected to rise to \$109,000 by 2012, the highest in the world. There is no personal income tax in Qatar.

- In 2011, Qatar was the United States' 56th Largest Export Market.
- Commercial ties between the United States and Qatar have been expanding at a rapid pace over the last seven years, with trade volumes growing by more than 446%, from \$738 million in 2003 to \$4.03 billion in 2011. Over the same period, U.S. exports increased 580% to \$2.8 billion, making the United States a major import partner for Qatar, accounting for about 11% of total Qatari imports (2011).

Market Challenges

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- **Foreign Investment:** With certain exceptions, Qatar's foreign investment law limits foreign ownership of local entities to 49% of the entity's capital. Foreign investors may own 100% of an entity's capital in sectors like agriculture, industry, health care, education, tourism and the exploitation and development of natural resources subject to approval by the Government of Qatar ("GOQ").
- **Foreign investors** must receive permission from the government to invest in the banking and insurance sectors. Foreign investment is not allowed in commercial agencies and real estate, although with respect to real estate there are limited

opportunities for foreigners to own interests in select real estate projects in the West Bay Lagoon area, Al-Khor district, Pearl of the Gulf Development project and certain other designated zones.

- **Banking:** A total of 19 banks operate in Qatar, including 11 Qatari institutions and eight foreign branch banks. Out of the 11 Qatari banks, eight are commercial institutions (Ahlibank, Al Khaliiji Bank, Barwa Bank, Commercial Bank of Qatar, Doha Bank, International Bank of Qatar, Qatar Development Bank, and Qatar National Bank); the other three are Islamic institutions (Masraf Al Rayan, Qatar International Islamic Bank and Qatar Islamic Bank). The eight foreign banks include: Arab Bank, Bank Saderat Iran, BNP Paribas, HSBC, Mashreq Bank, Standard Chartered, Barclays Bank and United Bank.
- **Commercial Agents:** The Commercial Agents law requires all agency agreements to be exclusive arrangements.
- **Corporate Income Tax:** The corporate income tax rate has been cut to a flat rate of 10%, effective January 1, 2010. Previously, foreign companies had to pay between 5 and 35 percent.
- **Government Procurement:** There are concerns about transparency in government procurement, particularly regarding the following: a lack of clarity in the conditions and criteria of tenders, improper notification or explanation to non-qualifying companies, irregularities in the awards process, and the inability to formally challenge awards.
- **Import Duties:** The import duty for most processed food products is a flat five percent ad valorem. There is no import duty for live animals, fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, grains, flours, tea, sugar, spices and seeds for planting. Existing import duties on tobacco products have been increased two-fold, from 100 to 200%, based on talks between the ministers of finance and health of several GCC countries.
- **Import Restrictions:** Qatar has no import quotas. However, non-tariff barriers arise occasionally. For example, a ban on pork was maintained until late 2011 but has been lifted as of 2012. Sale of pork is, however, regulated heavily, with sales being restricted to only be handled by Qatar Distribution Company.
- **Inflation:** The booming economy in Qatar is leading to shortages of materials and labor. This is compounded by a rapidly growing population, which is approaching two million people, up from just 700,000 five years ago. This has an inflationary effect on the economy, with housing prices particularly hard hit in years up to 2010. Inflation levels hit 3.3% in 2011 and are expected to average at 4% in 2012, with housing prices remaining depressed and the main brunt of burden falling upon food prices. The cost of living in Qatar is high by U.S. standards.
- **Standards and Labeling:** As part of the GCC Customs Union, the six Member States are working toward unifying their standards and conformity assessment regimes. However, each Member State applies its own standards until a uniform

GCC standard has been set. Labeling and marking requirements are compulsory for any products exported to Qatar.

- **Transparency:** Qatar ranked 22nd on Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, outperforming all other Middle Eastern economies.
- **Food Labeling and Packaging:** Arabic or bilingual English and Arabic language labels (or stickers) are required for all food products. Production and expiry dates are required to be on all "original" food labels.
- **Travel Advisories:** Americans visiting Qatar are advised to check the website http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1003.html for the latest information on travel to Qatar.

Market Opportunities

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- The Government of Qatar will continue to maintain high levels of capital spending on education and health. The government plans to invest \$9.9 billion on these sectors in the 2012/2013 fiscal year, accounting for 15% of its 2010/2011 fiscal budget. The Government of Qatar's strong commitment to invest in economic diversification through public spending on transportation, health care, education and housing projects will create multiplier effects on the rest of the economy, contributing to increased consumption and demand for better quality housing, office and retail facilities.
- **Energy Sector:** Qatar has attracted an estimated \$100 billion in investment, with approximately \$60-70 billion coming from the U.S. It is estimated that Qatar will invest over \$120 billion in the energy sector in the next ten years. Although a moratorium on North Field development is in place until at least 2015, Qatar is committed to diversifying within the hydrocarbon sector and developing its petrochemical industries in particular. **Construction:** It is estimated that Qatar will invest \$200 billion in roads, rail, port and other infrastructure development, housing and real estate, health/medical and sanitation projects in the next decade. USD 17 billion of Qatar's FY 2012 budget has been allocated to public works (25% of the total). The GOQ and private sector are actively seeking project designers, engineers and managers, in addition to needed production inputs like cement and heavy machinery and equipment.
- Qatar imports over 90 percent of its food. Major food suppliers to Qatar include the EU, Australia and Saudi Arabia. Most of Qatar's food product imports transit through the United Arab Emirates.
- Other sectors with significant opportunities include: Education and Training Services, Information Communication Technologies, Architecture, Construction, Engineering Services, Air Conditioning Equipment, Safety and Security, Defense Sales, Oil and Gas Equipment and Services, Medical Equipment and Services, and other sectors. Please see [Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment](#).

Market Entry Strategy

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- If you are a new-to-exporting company, first contact your local Export Assistance Center for free export counseling at <http://export.gov/export/index.asp>.
- The Commercial Section of the United States Embassy can give you a balanced assessment of your company's chances for success in Qatar. For more information, please visit <http://export.gov/qatar/>>
- **Come visit:** Qatar is like many Middle Eastern countries in that personal contact with potential agents and partners is key to successfully conducting business.
- **Get a lawyer:** Many U.S. companies advise that acquiring good legal representation is an important first step to entering the market. This helps you to establish and maintain good business relationships with Qatari partners. Hiring a lawyer is especially important before concluding commercial agreements. Occasionally, American firms, once their company starts making a profit, report difficulties with their Qatari sponsors and business partners. A good business lawyer can help you with such problems. The U.S. Embassy can provide you with a list of law firms currently operating in Qatar.
- **Feasibility study:** U.S. firms we interviewed recommend that you carefully conduct a feasibility study about your product or service's chances for success in the Qatari market. This study should be based on such factors as pre-existing competition, market channels, and local tastes. The Commercial Service offers various industry market research reports, as well as *Customized Market Research* that can form a strong basis for a viable feasibility study. Please contact the Commercial Section for more information.
- **Vet partners:** The Commercial Section at the U.S. Embassy offers several services to help you thoroughly vet prospective Qatari business partners and determine which Qatari companies would be best to work with. These services include the *International Company Profile*, the *International Partner Search*, and the *Gold Key Service*. These services are described in more detail by visiting: <http://export.gov/qatar/>.
- **Maintain independence:** Having a reliable local partner can mean the difference between success and failure in Qatar. However, U.S. firms advise not to rely too much on your local partner for all market intelligence and contacts affecting your business. We advise U.S. companies to negotiate expatriate labor visa issues with their sponsors, agents, and partners in the early stages of contract negotiation.
- **Adapt:** Successful U.S., European and other foreign companies understand that doing business internationally always creates challenges, and doing business in Qatar is no exception. Learn to live with new procedures and laws by injecting a healthy dose of flexibility into your business plan. The Commercial Service suggests U.S. firms insist on payment by letter of credit to avoid costly payment delays.

- Importers and distributors are most commonly used in the retail food business.
- Food processors and the hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sector may import directly or purchase goods locally from distributors.

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Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5437.htm>

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Using an Agent or Distributor

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In certain circumstances foreign companies doing business in Qatar may elect to have a local commercial agent. A commercial agent generally acts as the exclusive provider of services of the foreign principal or exclusive seller in Qatar for foreign produced goods. U.S. firms are strongly advised to avoid appointing one regional agent for a number of countries. U.S. companies having agency agreements or planning to have agency agreements with Qatari firms are encouraged to review Law No. 8/2002 (the "Commercial Agents Law"). The law consists of 28 articles, enshrining two basic principles:

- The business of commercial agents is exclusively restricted to Qatari nationals or to companies wholly owned by Qatari nationals.
- Any Qatari agency is to be considered as an exclusive agency.

It should be noted that the Commercial Agents Law mandates certain outcomes with respect to the expiration or termination of agency contracts and these provisions should be reviewed carefully when entering into an agency or distribution agreement.

When finally approved by both parties, the Arabic text of agency or representation agreements should be registered with the Commercial Affairs Department of the Ministry of Business & Trade (MOBT). Local agents usually follow up on the routine work required by the MOBT registration regulations. Disputes between parties in relation to an agency agreement are filed at the MOBT prior to referral to arbitration if appropriate. The local civil courts are the final course of action if the dispute cannot be resolved.

The Commercial Agents Law allows the importation and sale of brand name products by other local entities, upon payment of a commission not to exceed five percent to the appointed local agent, unless otherwise agreed between the parties in a written agency agreement.

To find a good agent, U.S. companies are encouraged to take advantage of services offered by the commercial section at the U.S. Embassy in Doha. A hyperlink to a full description of those services is provided below:

<http://export.gov/qatar/servicesforu.s.companies/index.asp>

Other resources for finding a local agent include international auditing firms, accounting firms and law offices. Even in these cases a visit to the Commercial Section of the United States Embassy in Doha is encouraged for additional information and insight.

The commercial agency law can be complex in its application and U.S. companies are encouraged to consult counsel prior to hiring an agent or selling goods or services into Qatar.

Establishing an Office

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In order to do business in Qatar and establish a local office, foreign and local companies are required to obtain a commercial registration from the Ministry of Business and Trade. Qatar enacted Law No. 25/2005 (the "Commercial Registry Law") which states that no individual person or single entity may engage in commercial activity before registering in the Commercial Registry maintained by the MOBT. Any inquiries regarding the registration process should be directed to the Director of Commercial Affairs at the MOBT.

- The general rule under Law No. 13/2000 (the "Foreign Investment Law") is that non-Qataris, whether natural or juristic persons, may invest only through the medium of a joint venture company incorporated in Qatar in which one or more Qatari persons or 100 percent Qatari-owned entities hold no less than 51% of the share capital. Joint venture companies with Qatari partners are allowed in all sectors of the economy excluding commercial agencies and real estate. Establishing a joint venture in the banking and insurance sectors is possible with an approval from the Cabinet of Ministers.

Important exceptions to the general rule are as follows:

- 100 percent foreign investment: Subject to an exemption from the Ministry of Business & Trade, the Foreign Investment Law allows foreign firms 100 percent ownership of the share capital of companies developing projects in the fields of agriculture, industry, health, education and tourism sectors, as well as projects involved in the development and exploitation of natural resources or energy or mining, pending approval from the government. The law specifically prohibits foreign investment in banking, insurance, commercial agencies and procurement or purchase of real estate. However, Law No. 31/2004 allows foreign investment in the banking and insurance sectors upon approval of the Cabinet of Ministers. Each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and foreign firms working in sectors not specifically mentioned in these laws may be granted a 100 percent ownership on a case-by-case basis, upon approval of the Ministry of Business and Trade.

Although there is paperwork to be filed, approvals to be obtained and registration fees assessed during this process, this mode of registration offers the opportunity for foreign companies to operate independently. However, it should be noted that only a small number of foreign companies have received the necessary Ministerial resolution to operate as a 100% wholly owned subsidiary.

- Article 68 companies: The Foreign Investment Law provides that it shall not apply to companies and individuals whom the State entrusts with excavation, utilization or management of natural wealth resources under a concession or agreement, nor to companies that are established by the Government or in which the Government participates (so called “Article 68 Companies”). Special rules apply in these circumstances.
- Representational office: The Decision of the Minister of Economy and Commerce No. 142/2006 provides that foreign firms may open representational offices without a local partner. Such offices may not conduct any financial transactions related to the company’s commercial activities in Qatar and are therefore not subject to taxation. Though the representational office may be registered in the Commercial Registry and employ staff in its own name, it is really a “shop window” to source business. A representational office could be converted into a joint venture company or 100% foreign ownership at a later date.
- Branch registration: The Foreign Investment Law contains provisions that, subject to an exemption from the Minister of Business & Trade, allow a branch of a foreign company to be registered in Qatar if that foreign company has a contract in Qatar that results in facilitating the rendering of a service or implies a public benefit. This has generally been interpreted to mean engaging in a contract with the GOQ or a quasi-government entity. This registration does not allow the foreign company to conduct commercial activity that is not related to the subject of its registration. Foreign companies registered under this category do not need a sponsor or service agent.
- Service agents or sponsorship: In the past this type of agency consisted of appointing a Qatari entity to act as a service agent for a foreign firm. Specific services would be determined by the two parties and may include handling administrative and business matters in Qatar, including immigration procedures, import licenses, providing introductions to decision-makers, etc. Although the service agent remains a common business practice in the region, it is no longer appropriate as an option for doing business in Qatar, specifically in light of Law No. 25/2004 which is commonly known as the “Proxy Law”. The Proxy Law was enacted in Qatar to address the practice of concealing non-Qataris doing business in Qatar in violation of existing Qatari law. It prohibits natural or legal persons from concealing the business activities of non-Qataris, for example by allowing a non-Qatari to use the name, license or commercial registration of Qatari party. According to Law No. 25/2004, the service agent relationship is considered a form of proxy business and fines and imprisonment penalties can be imposed on whoever infringes the law.
- QFC, QSTP, and Free Zones: The State of Qatar has established the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) and the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP). Both

provide environments for international companies and institutions to operate under certain free zone type conditions. The criteria and limitations to operate in these environments are fairly stringent. The QFC is restricted to financial services and ancillary services companies (excluding retail banking) and the QSTP is restricted to entities engaged in research and development activities in Qatar. Applications must be submitted by interested parties for both the QFC and the QSTP for assessment of eligibility to establish a corporate presence. Qatar is also developing additional investment free zones to attract investment in the industrial, agricultural, technical and tourism fields and other fields to be decided upon by the Cabinet of Ministers. These additional free zones are still in the developmental stage and it is not clear what rules and regulations will apply.

Franchising

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There are many franchises in Qatar besides fast food or casual dining. Franchises such as fitness centers, car rental, computer learning centers, apparel shops, real estate brokerage, and language learning centers exist. The potential of growth in non-food franchises is significant. Some Qatari entities have a strong interest in investing in this business, given the ease of readymade business plans offered by franchises. A local sponsor is required to establish a franchise business.

- One of the keys to success in franchise operations in Qatar is to use a local franchisee versus a regional master franchisee expanding to Qatar. Qataris are sensitive to businesses owned or operated in Qatar by neighboring countries' companies or nationals.
- U.S. fast food and casual dining restaurants are popular in Qatar, particularly with the younger generation.
- Most major U.S. fast food franchises are established in Qatar, with new ones opening regularly. A local sponsor is required to establish a franchise business.
- High per capita income, a rather young population, a high rate of unaccompanied expatriate population and the lack of alternate entertainment venues encourage out of home dining.

There is no specific Franchising legislation enacted in the State of Qatar, the Franchise structuring options and any actual Franchise operations are dictated by, and need to comply with a loose collection of laws and regulations, which regulate general issues of commercial law and trade, commercial relationships, foreign investment, share holder rights and obligations and so forth.

Direct Marketing

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Foreign companies are generally not allowed to market their products and services directly. A local agent is needed to do so, unless the foreign company has an appropriately registered entity in Qatar. However, in cases where the foreign company is working on a major public project, direct marketing to the contractor is possible. Direct marketing is also possible through the representational office.

Direct marketing is possible in the food processing sector, particularly in vegetable oils, including corn oil, soybean and sunflower-seed oils, beverage bases, dried pulses and a variety of food ingredients, particularly for the snack food and bakery industries.

Also, the growing HRI sector, particularly the hotel and the U.S. fast food and casual dining restaurants sectors, provide opportunities for direct marketing.

Joint Ventures/Licensing

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The Commercial Companies Law, Law No. 5/2002 (replacing Law No. 11/1981) controls the establishment of all private business concerns in Qatar. The updated law allows corporate mergers, corporate bonds, and the conversion of corporate partnerships into joint stock companies.

As mentioned above, joint ventures involving foreign partners primarily take the form of limited liability companies. Generally, foreign investors may own up to 49 percent and the Qatari partners no less than 51 percent of a limited liability concern. Foreign partners in partnerships organized as limited liability partnerships must pay the full amount of their contribution to authorized financial institutions in cash or in kind prior to the start of operations. These firms are normally required to set aside 10 percent of their profits each year in a statutory reserve, until it equals 50 percent of the venture's authorized capital.

Selling to the Government

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The Qatari government is the biggest end-user of a wide range of products and services. In principle, all government procurement contracts are administered under provisions of bidding and tender regulations included in Law No. 26/2005. The Central Tenders Committee (CTC) of the Ministry of Economy & Finance is responsible for processing the majority of public sector tenders that are in excess of QR 1 million. The CTC applies standard tendering procedures and adheres to established performance practices. It also establishes the standards for rules that regulate bidding procedures.

Information on CTC tenders may be obtained from the CTC office in Doha or on the Internet at <http://www.ctc.gov.qa>. In tenders valued in excess of QR 50 million (USD 13.5 million), the approval of the Emir is required. Technical bids submitted to the CTC, or other specialized tenders committees as the case may be, are referred to the appropriate government end-user for short-listing. The CTC then opens the commercial bids and recommends the lowest priced technically qualified bidder to the entity concerned, who will make the final award decision. Inquiries about specific award decisions should be directed to the CTC.

Some governmental entities have internal tender committees. Qatar Petroleum processes all tenders independently. Qatar Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior are responsible for issuing tenders for classified materials and services. Public Works Authority and Urban Planning and Development Authority issue their tenders independently, as well.

Bid and performance bonds are required in the form of unconditional bank guarantees with a local bank or certified bank checks local. The standard bid bond is 5 percent and

performance bond is 10 percent of the contract. However, the above rate can be larger for certain projects. Foreign architectural, contracting and engineering firms are not required to have a local presence for the bid process. However, by the time a contract is ready to be signed, participating foreign firms may need to have satisfied local establishment requirements.

The State Purchase Office (SPO), a division of the CTC, handles all local purchase orders (LPOs) for equipment and supplies required by various government ministries. The SPO handles bids worth hundreds of millions of dollars every year. The period for preparation of quotations is usually 30 days, but very often less than three weeks after the announcement of tenders. Under these circumstances, an established local distributor is very useful for successful bidding.

Government contracts may include arbitration clauses. Unless stated otherwise in the contract, the standard clauses stipulate that disputes emanating from government contracts will be subject to arbitration in Qatar. U.S. firms are advised, whenever possible, to reserve the right to appeal local arbitration decisions abroad.

Foreign and local contractors are usually paid 20 percent of the contract awarded to them against unconditional bank guarantees. Further payments are made according to a standard payment schedule based on the progress of the project. It should be noted that the payment schedule almost always authorizes the government to retain portions of payments due until after the completion and acceptance of the project. Foreign and local contractors may experience delayed payments, which do not accrue interest, usually due to bureaucratic red tape.

Arabic is the official language in Qatar though English is widely used. Bids should be in Arabic unless the tender document specifically indicates that English is required or accepted. Specifications generally conform with British/European and, in recent years, American standards.

Distribution and Sales Channels

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The GOQ is the biggest end user of a wide range of products and services. The government procurement process is based on standard tender procedures. A foreign supplier wishing to participate in government tenders may appoint a local commercial agent; however, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, appointing a commercial agent in Qatar raises specific legal and commercial issues that should be carefully considered by a foreign company or supplier. An effective agent in Qatar will have extensive contacts in both the public and private sectors, enabling the collection of valuable information for the business.

Most Qatari trading entities represent a variety of foreign firms in the local market. To maximize their market penetration, U.S. firms planning to appoint a Qatari agent should ensure that the local agent does not represent any competitor.

- Private supermarkets account for the vast majority of retail sales, and this sector is expanding.
- Consumer cooperative societies account for 20 percent of the food retail sales in Qatar.
- Institutional users account for 10 percent of food distributed.

- Wholesalers and small convenience stores account for the balance of 5 percent of food products marketed in Qatar.
- The distribution channel is as follows: importer/agent sells to private supermarkets (60 percent), cooperatives (20 percent), institutional users (10 percent) and wholesalers and convenience stores (5 percent).
- Wholesalers sell directly to consumers, to jobbers and small supermarkets and restaurants.
- Generic and brand supermarket promotions are common in Qatar and are commonly employed by both local and foreign companies.
- Newspaper advertisements and inserts are most commonly used for food and other products. TV advertising, while very effective, is expensive.
- Food product margins typically run 20-25 percent for distributors, 5 percent for wholesalers, when applicable, and 10-15 percent for retailers. Qatar does not apply a VAT.

Selling Factors/Techniques

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U.S. suppliers should emphasize the competitive price, high quality, and, if applicable, the new-to-market status of their products. Initial face-to-face contact with importers will significantly increase a company's business prospects. Qatari companies distributing foreign products usually request marketing and advertising assistance from the principals to introduce a new product to the market or to improve sales of existing products.

Electronic Commerce

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E-Commerce is still developing in Qatar since a significant number of Qataris and businesses are still learning to fully utilize computers and information technology. The majority of commercial banks and utility companies offer a wide range of services to their clients on their respective web sites. Qatar Central Bank (QCB) is primarily responsible for regulating electronic banking activities and electronic financial transactions. The GOQ is encouraging greater use of modern technology in government transactions. In fact, two major decisions were taken to promote and enhance E-Commerce. The first was the creation of the E-Government Committee and the second was the creation of the Supreme Council for Telecommunications and Information Technology. Several government services and transactions are now possible through the Internet. The private sector however, has taken slow steps in developing its B2B and B2C portals. E-Commerce is expected to flourish given GOQ interest in enhancing this service throughout Qatar.

Many advertising practices and strategies used by U.S. companies are familiar to Qatari firms. The most common forms of advertising are media announcements, billboards, and flyers. Local distributors generally develop advertising strategies in coordination with their principals. Several private advertising firms are equipped to handle promotional activities.

Most newspapers in Qatar, including three Arabic and three English dailies, have a large readership. These include the following:

Arabic:

Al-Sharq: P.O. Box 3488, Doha, State of Qatar, Tel: (+974) 4455-7731, Fax: (+974) 4455-7760, Email: alsharq1@qatar.net.qa; Website: <http://www.al-sharq.com>

Al-Watan: P.O. Box 22345, Doha, State of Qatar, Tel: (+974) 4466 5933 Fax: (+974) 4664 4482, Email: alwatan3@qatar.net.qa Website: <http://www.al-watan.com>

Al-Raya: P.O. Box 533, Doha, State of Qatar, Office of the Editorial President Tel: (+974) 4446 6599 or 4437 1353, Fax: (+974) 4435 0476, Email: Editor@raya.com, Website: <http://www.raya.com>

Al-Arab: P.O. Box 22612, Doha, State of Qatar, Tel: (+974) 4499 7333, Email: alarab@alarab.qa, Website: www.alarab.qa

English:

Gulf Times: P.O. Box 533, Doha, State of Qatar, Tel: (+974) 4435 0478(News) 4446 6404(Sports) 4446 6609(Advertising) 4446 6636(Home delivery), Fax: (+974) 4435 0474(Editorial) 44418811(Advertising), Email: editor@gulf-times.com, Website: <http://www.gulf-times.com>

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The state-owned Qatar Radio and Television Corporation operates Qatar Television (QTV) and the radio station Qatar Broadcasting Service (QBS). QTV, comprising Arabic and English channels, broadcasts pre-recorded commercials. QBS also carries advertisements. The locally operated pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera receives some public funding but is independently owned and operated. It also broadcasts advertising for local and regional companies and products. There are no private radio stations.

Qatar Broadcasting Service (QBS), P.O. Box 1414, Doha, State of Qatar, Tel: (+974) 4489 4444, Fax: (+974) 4487 0712.

Qatar Television, P.O. Box 1944, Doha, State of Qatar, Phone: (+974) 4486 4575, Fax: (+974) 4486 5411.

Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel with seven operational channels: Al-Jazeera Live, Al-Jazeera, Al-Jazeera Children, Al-Jazeera Sports 1 English and Al-Jazeera Documentary, P.O. Box 23123, Doha, Phone: (+974) 4489 7446 or 4489 7451, Fax: (+974) 4489 7472. Website: <http://www.aljazeera.net/e-marketing-eng/>

Al-Jazeera is an excellent means of promotion and advertising, as millions of people in the region watch its channels.

Pricing

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There is a large variety of local and foreign products in the Qatari market. Local consumers are very price conscious and actively seek out sales and promotions. Local distributors of international products often engage in promotions in order to attract consumers and gain market share. U.S. firms should work closely with their local distributor in order to determine appropriate pricing strategies.

There is no VAT or sales tax in Qatar. However, the matter is being discussed in the Gulf Cooperation Council meetings and VAT could be implemented in the future.

The average importer markup on food products is about 10-15 percent. Retail food prices are generally 25-30 percent above import prices.

Sales Service/Customer Support

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After sales service and customer support is considered to be the responsibility of the local distributor or agent. As a Qatari entity must obtain a license for all imports, local firms generally maintain a supply of spare parts for distributed products. Local distributors may also establish workshops for after-sales support, as appropriate. Foreign principals often provide regional and international training for technical support staff.

Protecting Your Intellectual Property

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Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property rights (IPR) in Qatar. It is important to have an overall strategy to protect IPR. IPR is protected in Qatar by virtue of international treaties and agreements to which Qatar is a member. In addition, it is also possible and recommended that IPR owners register such rights locally for added protection against violations. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants. The U.S. Commercial Service can often provide a list of local lawyers upon request.

It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and that the U.S. Government generally cannot enforce rights for private individuals in Qatar. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. While the U.S. Government is willing to assist, there is little it can do if the rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IPR in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the USG can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppels, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should USG advice be seen as a substitute for the obligation of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on partners. Negotiate from the position of your partner and give your partner clear incentives to honor the contract. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in Qatar require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with Qatari laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-sized companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IPR and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these, including:

- The U.S. Chamber and local American Chambers of Commerce
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
- International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
- International Trademark Association (INTA)

- The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy
- International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

IPR Resources

A wealth of information on protecting IPR is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

- For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the U.S. and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: **1-866-999-HALT** or register at www.StopFakes.gov.
- For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: **1-800-786-9199**.
- For more information about registering for copyright protection in the U.S., contact the U.S. Copyright Office at: **1-202-707-5959**.
- For U.S. small and medium-size companies, the Department of Commerce offers a "SME IPR Advisory Program" available through the American Bar Association that provides one hour of free IPR legal advice for companies with concerns in Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Russia, and Thailand. For details and to register, visit: http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/intlproj/iprprogram_consultation.html
- For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit: www.StopFakes.gov This site is linked to the USPTO website for registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), the U.S. Customs & Border Protection website to record registered trademarks and copyrighted works (to assist customs in blocking imports of IPR-infringing products) and allows you to register for Webinars on protecting IPR.

IPR Climate in Qatar

In addition to international treaties and agreements to which Qatar is party, intellectual property rights in Qatar are protected by Law No. 7/2002 (Copyright and Neighboring Rights Law), Law No. 9/2002 (Trademarks and Geographical Indicators Law), Law No.5/2005 (Protection of Trade Secrets), and Law No. 6/2005 (Protection of Layout Design of Integrated Circuits). Qatar has adopted the GCC Patent Law and created a GCC Patent Office. The Ministry of Business and Trade is responsible for enforcing these laws and other intellectual property rights matters.

The National Health Authority (NHA) requires registration of all pharmaceutical products

imported into the country and will not register unauthorized copies of products patented in other countries.

Due Diligence

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In the absence of local credit rating companies, U.S. companies are advised to perform due diligence checks prior to dealing with any local company. Due diligence checks on public companies can also be useful. U.S. companies are encouraged to perform due diligence checks on privately owned companies to assure the following:

- The local company is not designated on a U.S. or United Nations watch list for terrorist financing activities.
- The local company is not involved in any bribery or corruption charges.
- The local company enjoys a certain financial stability enabling it to meet its financial obligations.
- The local company and its owners enjoy a sound business and professional reputation in Qatar.

The Embassy's Commercial Section offers U.S. companies the International Company Profile (ICP) as one due diligence tool to help the U.S. firms make assessments of potential local business partners. A description of the ICP service is provided at the hyperlink below:

<http://export.gov/qatar/servicesforu.s.companies/index.asp>

Local Professional Services

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Auditing Firms

[Deloitte & Touche](#)
[Ernst & Young](#)
[KPMG](#)
[PricewaterhouseCoopers](#)

Banking

Qatari Banks:

[Ahlibank](#)
[Al Khaliji Bank](#)
[Barwa Bank](#)

Commercial Bank of Qatar
Doha Bank
International Bank of Qatar
Masraf Al Rayan
Qatar Development Bank
Qatar International Islamic Bank
Qatar Islamic Bank
Qatar National Bank

Foreign Banks' Branches:

Arab Bank
Bank Saderat Iran
B.N.P. Paribas
HSBC
Mashreq Bank
Standard Chartered Bank
United Bank

Freight Forwarding and Courier Services

Aramex
DHL
Federal Express
TNT Express
UPS
Skynet

Hotels

Top 10 Hotels in Qatar

The Ritz Carlton Doha
W Doha
Grand Hyatt Doha
The St Regis Doha
InterContinental Doha
Kempinski Residences and Suites Doha
Four Seasons Hotel Doha
The Torch Doha
Movenpick Tower Doha
Sharq Village & Spa Doha

Other Hotels

Al-Bustan Hotel
Al Ghariya Resorts
Al Liwan Suites
Al Muntazah Plaza Hotel

Doha Grand Hotel
Doha Seef Hotel
Doha Marriott Hotel
Doha Palace
Gulf Horizon Hotel
Gulf Paradise Hotel
Hotel Souq Waqif
La Cigale Hotel
Mercure Grand Hotel
Merweb Hotel
Millennium Hotel
New Capital Hotel
Ramada Plaza Hotel
Retaj Al Rayyan Hotel
Sealine Beach Resort
Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel
Somerset West Bay, Doha
Wyndham Grand Regency Doha

Insurance Companies

Al-Khaleej Insurance Company
Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance Co
Allianz Takaful QFC
Arabia Insurance Co
AXA Insurance (Gulf) BSC (C)
Capital Insurance Brokers LLC
Ceylinco Insurance
Doha Bank Assurance Company LLC
Doha Insurance Co (QSC)
General Takaful
Libano-Suisse Insurance Company
Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) International
Qatar General Insurance and Re-Insurance Company
Qatar Insurance Company
Qatar Islamic Insurance Company
SEIB Insurance & Reinsurance Co LLC
Tazur Company BSC
The American Life Insurance Company

Local Attorney List

Media

Al-Jazeera Satellite TV Station
Al-Watan
Al-Rayah
AL-Sharq
Gulf Times
The Peninsula

[Qatar News Agency](#)

Telecommunications

[Qatar Telecom](#)

[Vodafone](#)

[Local Business Tenders List](#)

Web Resources

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[Local Professional Services](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

Agriculture Sector

Commercial Sectors

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- [Architectural/Construction/Engineering Services](#)
- [Automotive](#)
- [Construction Equipment and Tools](#)
- [Defense Sales](#)
- [Education and Training and Equipment](#)
- [Information and Communication Technology](#)
- [Medical Equipment and Services](#)
- [Oil & Gas Equipment and Services](#)
- [Security and Safety Equipment](#)
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Agriculture Sector

Best Prospects

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In 2011, the United States agricultural and forest products exports to Qatar were valued at \$64 million. Leading U.S. exports included poultry meat (\$20 million), red meat-chilled and frozen (\$10 million), forest products (\$5 million), processed fruits and vegetables (\$4 million) and tree nuts (\$3 million). By and large, Qatar's food import regimes are usually non-trade restrictive. However, U.S. exporters of poultry meat should work to limit the amount of water in their products as a number of U.S. shipments have been detained because of concerns regarding shipments thawing en route to Qatar. For more information about agricultural trade prospects in Qatar and the region, please visit www.fas.usda.gov

Contact the [U.S. Agricultural Trade Office in Dubai](#) at:

atodubai@usda.gov.

Commercial Sectors

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Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Equipment

Overview

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	Unit: USD thousands			
	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	190.82	230.83		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	2.35	2.35		
Total Imports	190.82	230.83		
Imports from the U.S.	14.14	17.14		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: Trade estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Given the nature of the climate that is prevailing in the Persian Gulf; the Heating Air-Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration (HVAC/R) sector is always a best prospect. The boom in the real estate development market, the upgrade of existing infrastructure and the increase in population and visitors are the main drive for the increasing demand on HVAC/R equipment supplies and services.

The presence of an active chapter of The American Society for Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has contributed, in a large measure, to an increase on the demand for US HVAC/R products and services, given the standardizing nature of ASHRAE. As Qatar seeks to reduce its carbon footprint, opportunities for innovative cooling technologies, products, and services are eagerly sought.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Central Air-Conditioning Units equipment and supplies
- District cooling equipment and supplies
- Operations and Maintenance services

Opportunities

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- All the projects mentioned in Architecture/ Construction and Engineering services
- Two District cooling plants: Combined capacity 29,250 tonnes of refrigeration (TR). , Value \$ 50 million, Client: Musheireb Properties, Consultant: Drake & Scull International.

Web Resources

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[Qatar Cool](#)
[ASHRAE](#)
[District Cooling Qatar Summit 2012](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Architecture Construction Engineering

Overview

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(Services statistics are not available from the GOQ.)

It is estimated that more than \$200 billion will be invested in infrastructure development over the next ten years as part of the Emir's 2030 Vision and before the landmark event of Soccer FIFA World Cup2022. The public and private sectors rely heavily on international expertise in the area of architectural, construction and engineering services and there are a number of opportunities in this sector for U.S. firms.

The Public Works Authority, also known as Ashghal, has a plan to invest over \$27 bn in roads and drainage over the next five to seven years and the projects will be implemented with a strong emphasis on quality. Work on the project is scheduled to begin by the end of this year.

Just recently, Qatar launched its Framework Agreement Plan for its QR50bn project to construct roads, drainage and infrastructure networks across the country, with a new strategic approach focusing on quality and partnership between local and international companies. The projects consists of 220 projects to be implemented throughout the country at an estimated cost of QR50bn — 40 projects in the north of Qatar, 15 in the south, 68 in Doha North, 80 in Doha South and 18 in Doha West. The overall Program Manager is the US based Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Under this Framework Plan, only Qatari companies can bid for projects costing up to \$55m each, which account for 163 projects (of the total 221) worth a total of \$3.15bn.

Bidding for projects costing \$55m to \$247.2 m is open for Qatari companies or a joint venture company with a 50 percent Qatari partnership. Total number of projects under this category is 48 worth a total of \$7.08bn. The same rule applies to projects costing above \$247.2m, which comprise 10 projects worth a total of QR4.4bn.

The Supreme Committee for Qatar 2022 appointed earlier this year U.S. firm CH2M Hill Inc. for the program management contract and will oversee the construction of sports facilities planned for the World Cup.

QRail has commenced a \$35billion rail program that includes four metro lines and two People Mover's with High Speed and Freight Rail to follow. Ground has also been broken on the New Port Project worth \$8 billion. The New Doha International Airport (NDIA) is scheduled to open in 2012, and additional phases are planned with tremendous opportunities.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Engineering and Architectural Services
- Construction and Program Management Services

Opportunities

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There are numerous opportunities for U.S. companies in the infrastructure and real estate development arenas. It is virtually impossible to list all the major opportunities,

given their high numbers. We are mentioning the major ones and refer the reader to the website of each government body for the most up-to-date information.

- **Umm Slal Stadium:** Umm Slal Stadium, located in the vicinity of one of Qatar's most historically important forts, will have 45,120 seats. The design is a modern interpretation of traditional Arab forts, like the one in nearby Umm Slal Mohammed. After the FIFA World Cup, seating capacity will be reduced to 25,500. The stadium will be used by Umm Slal F.C.
- **The Amphibious 1000:** Project consists of building a semi-submerged luxurious resort on the Qatar Coast that will cost approximately \$500 million. The project is designed by the Italian firm Giancarlo Zema Design Group.
- **Twin Towers in West Bay:** The project consists of Twin Towers are a mixed used development that will be divided into a hotel and an office block. Both towers consist of 46 floors that sit on a podium and have four basement levels that are dedicated to car parking.
- **Al Khor Stadium:** Al-Khor is a brand new 45,330-capacity stadium with a stunning seashell motif and a flexible roof. The permanent lower tier seats 25,500 and the modular upper tier seats 19,830. The stadium offers spectators a stunning view of the Arabian Gulf from their seats and will be located in a sports and recreation zone.
- **Urjuan Project:** Urjuan project is an integrated high end city that will be developed by BARWA Group at Al Khor City. It will cover an area of 5.5 million square meters. The estimated construction cost is USD 35 billion on completion.
- **Al Rayyan Stadium:** The existing Al-Rayyan Stadium with a seating capacity of 21,282 will be expanded to 44,740 seats using modular elements to form an upper tier. The stadium is designed with a special "media membrane" facade that acts as a screen for projecting news, updates and current matches. The stadium will be downsized to its current capacity after the tournament.
- **Al Shamal Stadium:** Al Shamal stadium will have a capacity of 45,120, with a permanent lower tier of 25,500 seats and a modular upper tier of 19,620 seats. The stadiums shape is derived from the "dhow" fishing boat used in the Gulf. Spectators are expected to arrive from the Doha Expressway, water taxis, the Bahrain-Qatar Friendship Bridge and the new Metrorail.
- **Al Wakrah Stadium:** Al-Wakrah is one of Qatar's oldest cities, with a long history of commercial fishing and pearl diving. Al-Wakrah stadium, with a capacity of 45,120, takes its cues from the sea that has played such an important role in the city's history. After the FIFA World Cup, the stadium's capacity will be reduced to 25,500 seats.
- **Doha Metro Project:** Doha metro is an 85-KM railway network in Qatar. The railway will include an east coast link, a high-speed link, a freight link and a light rail system. The railway will serve suburb of Doha and developments such as Lusail, Education city and West Bay.
- **Entertainment City Qatar:** This project shall be built at Lusail City covering 180,000 square meters allotted to entertainment activities. The city shall include Aqua Park, Game Parks, Theater, Hotels, Residential Area and Snow Dome.
- **Al Gharafa Stadium:** The existing 21,175 capacity Al-Gharafa stadium will be expanded to 44,740 seats using modular elements forming an upper tier. The facade will be made up of ribbons representing the nations that qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup and will symbolize football and the mutual friendship,

- tolerance and respect that the tournament represents. The stadium will be downscaled to its existing capacity after the tournament ends.
- **Education City Stadium:** Education City Stadium takes the form of a jagged diamond, glittering by day and glowing by night. The 45,350-seat stadium will be located in the midst of several university campuses at Education City, easily accessible for fans both in Qatar and in neighboring Bahrain, which will be only 51 minutes away from the stadium by high-speed rail. Following the FIFA World Cup, the stadium will retain 25,000 seats for use by university athletic teams.
 - **Doha Port Stadium:** Doha Port Stadium is a proposed football stadium which will be built in Doha, Qatar in time for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The new Doha Port Stadium will be a completely modular stadium with 44,950 seats. The stadium, which will sit on an artificial peninsula in the Gulf, is designed to evoke its marine setting. Water from the Gulf will run over its outer facade, aiding in the cooling process and adding to its visual allure. Fans will have the option of arriving on a water taxi or ferry. After the FIFA World Cup, the whole stadium will be disassembled and the seats sent to developing countries to further their football development.
 - **Khalifa International Stadium:** Redesigned for Qatar's successful hosting of the 2006 Asian Games, Khalifa International Stadium's current capacity of 50,000 will be expanded to 68,030 for the 2022 FIFA World Cup™. The stadium, which includes sweeping arcs and partially covered stands, is the centerpiece of Aspire Zone, a sports complex that includes the Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence, ASPETAR Sports Medicine Hospital and many other sporting venues.
 - **Lusail Development:** Lusail is a new coastal city under construction north of Doha and will cover 35km². The project will contain 18 different districts and will include a lagoon with two marinas, 25,000 residential units, high and low-rise buildings, commercial districts and mixed-use areas, retail areas, two golf courses, 22 schools, and a hospital.
 - **Lusail Iconic Stadium:** The new Lusail Iconic Stadium, with a capacity of 86,250, will host the opening and final matches of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Located in Lusail City, the stadium takes its inspiration from the sail of a traditional show boat and is surrounded by water. After the FIFA World Cup, the stadium will be used to host other spectacular sporting and cultural events.

Web Resources

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[Qatar Petroleum](#)
[Central Tenders Committee](#)
[Public Works Authority](#)
[Hamad Medical Corporation](#)
[The Pearl of the Gulf](#)
[Projects Qatar 2012](#)
[New Doha International Airport](#)
[United Development Company](#)
[Qatar National Bank](#)
[Qatari Diar](#)
[Barwa Real Estate](#)
[Musheireb Properties](#)
[The New Doha Port](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Automotive

Overview

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	Unit: USD thousands			
	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	2563.65	3101.11		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	9.44	9.44		
Total Imports	2563.65	3101.11		
Imports from the U.S.	267.07	294.55		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: Trade estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Given the increase of the population in Qatar, the need for means of transportation has increased tremendously in the last few years. Economic growth has contributed to an increase of personal wealth which leads to the purchase of additional, more expensive vehicles. On the industrial side, the need for trucks and utility vehicles has increased given the level of economic activity in all sectors. The demand for spare parts, car care products and accessories has likewise increased as the number of used vehicles has reached around 500,000 units. The number of medium and heavy duty trucks is in the neighborhood of 100,000 units.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Sports Utility Vehicles (Gas guzzlers)
- Trucks, Vans and Buses
- All Terrain Vehicles (ATV), Utility Vehicles (UTVs)
- Specialized trucks and vehicles
- Car care products
- Aftermarket parts, accessories, and spare parts

Opportunities

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- Tenders published by the different governmental institutions
- Market penetration through appointment of distributors

Web Resources

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Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

Construction Equipment and Tools

Overview

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Unit: USD thousands

	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	921.89	1115.16		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	49.63	49.63		
Total Imports	921.89	1115.16		
Imports from the U.S.	381.57	461.56		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: Trade estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Given the magnitude and schedule of the construction projects planned, there is an increased need for new construction equipment. Local contractors recognize the superior quality and performance of U.S. construction equipment.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Heavy equipment (used and new)
- Refuse truck collectors
- Student buses
- Other Municipal equipment

Opportunities

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- All the projects mentioned in Architecture/Construction and Engineering services
- Other projects in the Oil & Gas sector

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<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Defense Sales

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The U.S. Military strategic partnership in Qatar has made great strides since 1992 and become more robust since 9/11. The U.S. military commitment and relationship to Qatar is strong in view of its physical presence in Qatar, i.e., U.S. Central Command's Forward Headquarters and the Combined Air Operations Center.

Qatar's defense expenditures are relatively minimal (in the single digits as a percentage of GDP). Qatar maintains a modest military force of about 12,000 men total, including an army, navy, and air force. The country has a public security force of about 10,000 men, including police, a coast guard, national firefighting force, air wing, marine police, and an internal security force. Qatar also has signed defense pacts with the U.S., U.K., and France. Qatar plays an active role in the collective defense efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC--the regional organization of the Arab states in the Gulf; the other five members are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the U.A.E., and Oman). Qatari forces played an important role in the first Gulf War and the 2011 revolution in Libya, and Qatar has supported U.S. military operations critical to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Qatar hosts CENTCOM Forward Headquarters. (US State Department Background Note)

Earlier this year, Qatar Emiri Air Force leadership announced that his country is evaluating the capabilities of different fighter jets and that the winner will be announced by the end of current year. It is likely Qatar would order between 24 and 36 units. The new planes would replace the QEAF's existing fleet of French-made Dassault Mirage 2000-5s.

The fighters that are being evaluated are made by companies in France, the UK, Italy and the US. These include the Lockheed Martin F-16, the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and Boeing F-15, the Eurofighter Typhoon and the Dassault Rafale.

Qatar owns four Boeing C-17 and 4 Lockheed-Martin C-130J-30s Hercules.

The Qatari Navy is also looking at renewing its fleet of strategic and tactical warships

In addition, the future offers U.S. firms promise in military training, education, logistics and maintenance services. In the medium term, the total U.S. export value for the Qatari defense market is estimated to be \$5 to \$7 billion.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Military aircraft (fixed- and rotary-wing)
- Small arms and ammunition
- Anti-tank weapons systems
- Integrated air and missile defense systems
- Naval ships and tactical speed boats

Opportunities

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- 10-12 new fighter aircraft
- 10-12 new trainer aircraft
- 10-12 new multi-role capability helicopters
- Anti-tank weapons (Javelin or TOW) for all security services (Armed and Internal Security Forces, Special Forces, Coast Guard, and Emiri Guard)
- Integrated air and missile defense systems
- Command and Control architecture
- Logistics, maintenance, training and education across the spectrum

Web Resources

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Contact the Office of Military Cooperation Qatar of the U.S. Embassy in Doha through

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Education Training and Equipment

Overview

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(Services statistics are not available from the GOQ.)

Qatar is using its hydrocarbon-fueled wealth in part to invest in educational reform. The Government of Qatar (GOQ) recognizes that it must develop a diversified, knowledge-based economy to ensure the country continues to thrive over the long-term. Seeing the failure of educational systems throughout the Arab world, Qatar is overhauling its primary and secondary schools along a U.S. model of competitive charter schools. For university education, they have imported not just the American model, but the U.S. universities themselves – six at last count, with others to come – with the goal of creating the best-educated citizens in the Middle East, fully prepared to participate in the global economy.

Qatar Foundation (QF) is a major vehicle for the GOQ for education. Qatar Foundation's flagship project is a 2,500 acre campus in Doha which hosts 6 U.S. universities: Weill-Cornell Medical College (medicine); Carnegie Mellon University (computer science, business); Georgetown School of Foreign Service (political science and international affairs); Virginia Commonwealth University (design); Texas A&M University (engineering); and Northwestern University (journalism). Qatar Foundation intends to import more U.S. universities in the future. The Supreme Education Council, through the Outstanding Schools Initiative, has imported one U.S. high school and plans to import more.

Qatar currently has almost 90 independent schools which function like charter schools in the United States. While the Government of Qatar (GOQ) requires all independent schools to comply with national curriculum standards in all core subjects, the GOQ is gradually modifying its educational curriculum to match international baccalaureate standards. The GoQ is looking to expand the number of primary and secondary private schools, particularly high-quality ones, to cater to the growing population of foreign professionals working in Qatar, and provide options to its citizens.

The Government of Qatar's senior leadership has enunciated a Qatarization strategy, which seeks to educate highly productive, skilled Qatari nationals to meet the demands of the labor market. "Qatarization" is designed to increase the number of Qatari nationals in all joint venture industries and government departments to assume key positions formerly occupied by expatriates. The target is 50% of the workforce in the industry and energy sector.

The Government of Qatar provides every citizen free education at the primary and secondary level. The Government of Qatar's Higher Education Institute (HEI) scholarship awards full scholarships to Qatari nationals admitted into a variety of designated undergraduate and graduate schools in the United States (as well as other countries). The goal is to provide these Qataris with the appropriate mix of skills in key sectors in support of Qatarization. According to the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, student visas issued to Qataris are up 35% from 2007-2008.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- **Language:** ESL and TOEFL
- **Undergraduate:** Business, Engineering, Communication
- **Certificate Programs:** Firefighting, Law Enforcement Forensics, Security Training, Ongoing Professional Development at Qatari state-owned enterprises
- **Post-Graduate:** Pharmacy, Dentistry, MBAs

Opportunities

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This sector is open for new opportunities but must fit into the educational and economic goals of the Qatar Foundation and the GOQ. Qatar Foundation continues to look for U.S. universities to join Education City. The GOQ is investing significant resources to train Qatari youth to enable them to become entrepreneurs and qualified professionals for the economy.

Law No. 13-2000 allows 100 percent foreign ownership in the education sector pending approval from the government.

Web Resources

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[Qatar Foundation](#)
[Ministry of Education](#)
[Supreme Education Council](#)
[Qatar Petroleum](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Information and Communication Technology

Overview

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Unit: USD thousands

	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	2028.97	2454.33		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	10.98	10.98		
Total Imports	2028.97	2454.33		
Imports from the U.S.	97.42	117.841		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Source: Industry Sources

IT is one of the centerpoints of the government's plans to create a diversified, knowledge-based economy in Qatar. A current priority of Government IT regulator and promotion agency "ict QATAR" is to increase ICT use by SMEs, which is seen as essential to the country's diversification efforts. In 2008, ictQATAR launched new programs targeted at SMEs, including the e-Business Pilot project, a program to help a selected group of SMEs maximize ICT use.

ict QATAR has several priority policy areas, including telecoms liberalization, online government, e-learning, e-health, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Along with its goal to increase ICT use in SMEs, the government is also implementing a major IT initiative in the healthcare area.

Qatar's Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (SCICT) was set up in 2005 to develop ICT in Qatar. At the launch of the new policy making and regulatory body – generally referred to as ictQATAR – Chairman Sheikh Tamim said that the aim was to implement more than 100 programs and initiatives during the coming five years.

Key objectives include skills development, the delivery of e-services and the establishment of a regulatory environment that promotes growth and benefits citizens, businesses and the government. ictQATAR was established by Emiri Decree. ictQATAR's priority programs include 'Broadband for All', which aims to provide broadband access to the community at large, with high bandwidth and competitive tariffs, and leverage wired and wireless technologies.

In addition, the Qatari government has identified a number of priority R&D areas, including healthcare, environmental technology, computer science and nanotechnology. Qatar will invest target 2.8% of GDP in research projects in these areas. According to government officials, IT will be the central lever to trigger and accelerate the development of Qatar as a hub for research.

The Qatari government has outlined plans to invest QAR6bn (US\$1.6bn) in information technology and IT services as part of its ICT-2015 strategy.

Computers Sales: The Qatari addressable computer hardware market including PCs, notebooks and accessories is forecast to be around US\$244mn in 2011. The Qatari computer hardware market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 7% between 2011 and 2015.

Software Sales: The software market was valued at US\$91mn in 2011. With the evolution of the IT market, a stronger strategic focus on software spending is being seen; software spending is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13% during our five-year forecast period (2011 – 2015).

IT Services: The IT services market is forecast to be the fastest-growing segment of the Qatari IT market between 2011 and 2015, outperforming the hardware and software sectors. Indeed, It had been steadily increasing in the last 10 years. With IT services spending estimated to grow to US\$275mn by 2015, the next period promises to see more opportunities in sectors such as financial services, healthcare, education, and communications.

E-Readiness: Qatar was one of the regional movers in the UN's most recent e-readiness survey. Qatar moved up four places to 32nd, due to government initiatives and expanding broadband penetration. The country performed even better in the e-government rankings, moving from 62nd to 53rd place. The government launched a new e-services portal in 2008 and is rolling out new initiatives in various areas.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Software and hardware security solutions
- E-commerce
- E-Education
- Electronic Archiving Systems

Opportunities

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- Tenders published by the different governmental institutions
- Market penetration through appointment of distributors

Web Resources

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[Qatar Telecom](#)

[Qatar E-Government](#)

[Vodafone Qatar](#)

[The Supreme Council for Information & Communication Technology](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

Medical Equipment and Services

Overview

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Unit: USD thousands

	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	171.12	90.30		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	N/A	N/A		
Total Imports	171.12	90.30		
Imports from the U.S.	80.15	42.91		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: Trade estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Note: The above figures relate only to equipment.

Health care is a priority concern for the Qatari leadership. The Qatari Government is constantly upgrading the quality health services using technology, international expertise and knowledge. In Qatar, healthcare services are either free or highly subsidized. According to industry estimates, the market for medical equipment will grow over the next five years. The market relies on imports from Europe, Asia and the United States. In fact, the U.S. is one of the leading exporters of medical equipment, medical supplies, medicines and pharmaceuticals to Qatar. Qatar's strong interest in importing medical equipment, healthcare technology and supplies from the U.S. is driven by two factors: (1) the rise of new construction projects for hospitals and health care centers; and (2) Qatar's lack of local production capacity in this area.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Medical Equipment
- Medical Supplies
- Equipment and supplies for persons with special needs
- Specialized medical services
- Healthcare technology
- Books and publications
- Training

Opportunities

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- Hamad Medical City, owned and funded by Hamad Medical Corporation, is a \$900 million integrated medical complex consisting of several specialty hospitals. Work is underway to build an associated medical complex that will consist of the following: a 338 bed-Pediatric Hospital, a 200-bed Orthopedic Hospital, a 230-

bed Physical Medicine and Physiotherapy Hospital, a 40-bed Day Care Surgery Center, and a 228-room Home Care Center for the elderly.

- Sidra Medical and Research Facility, owned and funded by the Qatar Foundation with an \$8 billion endowment, Sidra will be the first academic medical center in Qatar based on a U.S. model. Working in partnership with the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar and the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), the hospital's main focus will be to provide world-class medical care for women and children, to train medical students and clinicians, and to specialize in pregnancy health, infertility, genetic abnormalities, and other diseases specific to females. Several U.S. companies providing medical equipment have already won lucrative contracts with HMC.

Web Resources

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[Central Tenders Committee](#)
[Hamad Medical Corporation](#)
[Sidra Foundation](#)

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Oil & Gas Field Machinery and Equipment

Overview

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Unit: USD thousands

	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	1264.45	1529.54		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	N/A	N/A		
Total Imports	1264.45	1529.54		
Imports from the U.S.	110.20	133.31		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: Trade estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Note: The above figures relate only to equipment.

Qatar enjoys a reserve of approximately 14.6 billion barrels of crude oil and 910 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Qatar has attracted an estimated \$100 billion in investment, with approximately \$60-70 billion coming from the U.S. Although a moratorium on North Field development is in place until at least 2015, Qatar is committed to diversifying within the hydrocarbon sector and developing its petrochemical industries in particular.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Oil & Gas Field Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
- Oil & Gas Field Services

Opportunities

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Law No. 13-2000 permits foreigners, upon approval, to own up to 100 percent of any investment made in the energy and mining sectors.

A new Petrochemicals Complex at Ras Laffan: The petrochemicals complex will include a mono-ethylene glycol (MEG) plant with a capacity of up to 1.5 million tonnes a year (t/y), along with other olefin derivatives. Shell will develop the complex at Ras Laffan. Project completion date is expected in 2018.

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[Qatar Petroleum](#)

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Safety and Security Equipment

Overview

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Unit: USD thousands

	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)	2013 (estimated)
Total Market Size	350.88	424.44		
Total Local Production	0	0		
Total Exports	0.06	0.06		
Total Imports	350.88	424.44		
Imports from the U.S.	20.53	24.83		
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	3.64 QR	3.64 QR		

Total Market Size = (Total Local Production + Total Imports) – (Total Exports)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Qatar Planning Council

Note: The above figures relate only to equipment.

Comprehensive statistics for the sector are not available as the GOQ does not publish trade data for all military and security items.

High economic and demographic growth and the changing geopolitical climate have led to an increased focus on security. There has been a noticeable increase in security procedures in private and government establishments. Private and semi-private entities are upgrading existing security and safety equipment to keep ahead of changing security requirements.

The unrest witnessed by certain countries in the region, and the Qatari involvement in the regional and international political arena have raised the awareness of the Qatari decision makers to beef up their security procedures and logistics. That will involve the use of state-of-the-art technology given the limited human resources.

In the safety arena and after few unfortunate fire incident that cost the life of a dozen of expatriates, the government of Qatar is expected to upgrade all of its safety standards and NFPA, UL and other US standards are more likely to be widely adopted.

Given the high regard local consumers have for U.S. expertise in the security sector and the favorable exchange rate compared to other convertible currencies, U.S. exports of security related equipment and systems are expected to increase in coming years.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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- Access control
- Asset tracking
- Chemical trace detection
- Computer security
- Forgery/ Fraud
- Integrated security systems, Building management systems

- Intrusion detection equipment
- Perimeter protection
- Protective barriers
- Travel safety and security
- Electronic safety and fire detection
- Metal detection
- Communications systems
- Fire protection equipment and supplies

Opportunities

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Qatar has embarked on a vast program to reform its police and military units. Information about projects with the Ministry of Interior, Qatar Armed Forces or any other security agency is considered sensitive.

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[Ministry of Interior](#)

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Travel and Tourism

Overview

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Qatar's \$153 Million U.S.-bound market holds enormous potential for the domestic U.S. travel industry. In order to increase market share, U.S. travel entities are encouraged to promote their products and services directly to Qatar's consumers and travel agents. Doha's strategic location and its massive international airport under construction mean Qatar will become a major transit point for people in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Qatar Airways flies to three destinations in America: Washington, DC, New York, and Houston 21 times per week. Qatar Airways is planning to add Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, and Detroit to its U.S. network of destinations.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Office of Tourism Industries recorded a 10.2 % growth rate in the number of Middle East travelers to the United States in 2010 to 2011, totaling 810,688 visitors. According to industry sources, the number of outbound passengers from Qatar to the United States will witness an increase of at least 30% in 2012. Most Qataris who travel to the United States are business travelers, though considerable numbers of individuals, tour groups and families also visit the United States.

The average expense per person each day in the United States is approximately \$4,011 including accommodations, meals, and shopping (excluding airfare). Industry experts report over \$153 Million in expenditures per year by inbound travelers from Qatar within the United States on travel-related services, excluding airfare.

In addition to Qatar Airways, the Emirates, Ettihad, Royal Air Jordan, Egypt Air and Turkish Airlines fly directly to several U.S. destinations, including New York, Houston, Los Angeles and Chicago. United Airlines and Delta are flying directly to cities in the Gulf Cooperation Council. United started a direct service from Washington Dulles to Doha via Dubai in May 2012. European carriers such as Lufthansa, Air-France-KLM-Northwest and British airways are also carrying passengers from Qatar to different destinations in the United States, leveraging their network and daily flights to the region.

Best Products/Services

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Over 70 travel agents and 12 tour operators work in the Qatari outbound travel market. This market is fast-paced and competitive. Operators and airlines advertise special packages and seasonal deals on an almost daily basis, especially during summer vacation between July and August and Qatar's holidays in the months of September and December. Tour operators specialize in market segments rather than in specific destinations and most operators are conservative when selecting new travel products.

U.S. passenger service companies, travel attractions, restaurants, outlet shopping and family travel destinations may find opportunities in Qatar, especially by offering new travel products and a high level of services.

Opportunities

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The Commercial Service is implementing a Discover America initiative, which consists of a group of private airline carriers, travel agents and tour operators seeking to promote the United States as a destination for travel and tourism among families and businesses resident in Qatar.

For more information please contact the Commercial Service at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

You can also contact us for customized, individualized or standard information on the Qatari travel market, responding with specific information relevant to your products or services. We can provide answers regarding the overall marketability of a product or service, market size and trends, customary distribution and promotion practices, market entry requirements and potential agents, distributors, or strategic partners.

Resources

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[U.S. Dept. of Commerce Office of Travel & Tourism Industries](#)
[Amadeus Market Information](#)
[Qatar Airways](#)
[Qatar Tourism & Exhibitions Authority](#)

Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs and Standards

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Import Tariffs

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In accordance with the GCC Customs Union, outlined in Law No. 41/2002 and implemented as the GCC Unified Customs Law on January 1, 2003, Qatar imposes a five percent ad valorem tariff on the cost, insurance and freight (C.I.F.) invoice value of most imported products, including food products. The GCC has approved exemptions for approximately 400 goods (including basic food products such as live animals, fresh fruit and vegetables, seafood, wheat, flour, rice, feed grains, spices, seeds for planting and powdered milk), diplomatic and consular imports, military and security products, civilian aviation, personal effects and used household items, passenger accompanied luggage and gifts, goods destined for charitable use, ships and other vessels for the transport of passengers and floating platforms, and products to be used for industrial projects. Qatar also has a 20 percent tariff on iron bars and rods, non-alloy hot-rolled steel and 12 millimeter steel bars as well as cement. 30 percent customs duties are levied on imports of urea and 15 percent are levied on imports of records and musical instruments. Pork and pork products are illegal under Qatari law. Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are subject to a 100 percent import duty. Projects funded by the Qatar Industrial Development Bank (QIDB) can be granted a customs duty waiver for the import of machinery, raw materials, and other industrial inputs.

Trade Barriers

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Qatar has no trade barriers regarding the exportation and importation of goods and products. Qatar adheres to the WTO agreements for customs valuation and trade facilitation.

Import Requirements and Documentation

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All importers are required by law to have an import license. Import licenses are issued only to Qatari nationals, or to the Qatari partner in a limited liability partnership, and must be registered with the Ministry of Business and Trade. This regulation also applies to wholly foreign owned entities operating in Qatar.

Import Licenses: All imported meats, including beef and poultry products, require a health certificate issued by the country of export and a "Halal" slaughter certificate issued by an approved Islamic center in that country.

In order to clear goods from customs zones at ports or land boundaries in Qatar, importers must submit a variety of documents, including a detailed customs declaration, bill of lading, certificate of origin, pro forma invoice and import license. Information on specific requirements should be obtained from the Customs and Ports General Authority. Inspection of goods is generally conducted at the customs station, or as directed by the Director General, in the presence of the owner or his representative

Customs and Ports General Authority

P.O. Box 81, Doha, State of Qatar

Phone: (974) 4441-1149

Fax: (974) 4441-4959

Contact: Sheikh Hassan Bin Nasser Bin Jassim Al-Thani, Director General

Mr. Essa Jassim Mohammed, Office Director

In Qatar, the letter of credit (L/C) is the most common instrument for controlling exports and imports. When an L/C is opened, the supplier is required to provide a certificate of origin and a certificate from the captain of the ship or from the shipping agency stating that the ship is allowed to enter Arab ports. An Arab Embassy or Consulate or an Arab Chamber of Commerce should notarize both documents in the exporting country.

A letter of credit initiated in Qatar is usually endorsed with transshipment clauses. Most of the goods imported into Qatar from the U.S. and elsewhere come via the nearby ports of Dubai and Sharjah, both in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). Transshipment clauses serve the purpose of advancing those goods from the U.A.E. to Qatar by land (by truck) and/or sea (by barge). It is customary in Qatar for importers to build their L/C's computations on "cost and freight (C&F)" basis, and not C.I.F. Qatari merchants prefer to have insurance coverage provided by local and international insurance companies, to cover damage in transit to the goods covered under the L/C.

U.S. Export Controls

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A variety of sensitive items may not be imported into Qatar. The Qatar Distribution Company monopolizes the importation of alcohol. Pork and pornographic items may not be imported. Military and security items are forbidden unless licensed by local authorities. Narcotics, flammable and radioactive products are also banned, as are any products that violate trademarks or originate in boycotted countries.

Standard U.S. export controls and licensing procedures are applicable to Qatar.

Temporary Entry

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Some categories of goods may be temporarily admitted without collection of customs duties. These include: heavy machinery and equipment for project execution, semi-finished products, use in exhibitions and temporary events and machinery, equipment imported for repair, containers and materials for refilling, animals for grazing, and commercial samples.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

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Current laws and regulations of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and the National Health Authority (NHA) require labeling and marking requirements to be honored, especially where import of foodstuffs is concerned.

All imported meats require a health certificate issued by the country of export and a Halal slaughter certificate issued by an approved Islamic center in that country.

Qatar enforces GCC shelf-life standards GS 150/1993, Part I and II, which combined affect 170 food products. The manufacturer's established shelf life is accepted for other food products. Production and expiry dates must be printed on the original label or container by the manufacturer. Dates cannot be added after the fact via a sticker. Products must arrive at destination with at least half the shelf-life duration remaining. The U.S. supplier should work closely with the importer to ensure compliance with local shelf-life requirements. Food labels must include product and brand names, production and expiry dates, country of origin, name and address of the manufacturer, net weight in metric units, and a list of the ingredients in descending order of importance. All fats and oils used as ingredients must be specifically identified on the label. Labels must be in Arabic only or in Arabic/English. Arabic stickers are accepted.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

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Pork, pork products and pornographic material are illegal in Qatar. The Qatar Distribution Company monopolizes the importation of alcohol. Military and security items are forbidden unless licensed by local authorities. Narcotics, flammable and radioactive products are also banned. Any products that violate trademarks are also banned. Qatar participates in the primary aspects of the Israel boycott but there is an Israeli Trade Representative Office located in Doha.

Customs Regulations and Contact Information

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Qatar is a member of the GCC Customs Union which came into effect in 2003. In accordance with the GCC Customs Union, Qatar maintains a five percent tariff on a wide range of products. Basic food products such as wheat, flour, rice, feed grains and powdered milk are exempted from tariffs. The tariff on alcoholic beverages and tobacco products is 100 percent. Qatar also has a 20 percent tariff on iron bars and rods, non-alloy hot-rolled steel and 12 millimeter steel bars. Qatar maintains a five percent tariff on all textile imports. Projects funded by the Qatar Industrial Development Bank (QIDB) can be granted a customs duty waiver for the import of machinery, raw materials and other industrial inputs.

Standards

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- [Product Certification](#)
- [Accreditation](#)
- [Publication of Technical Regulations](#)
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Overview

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The Government is currently developing its standards regime to meet internationally and regionally-recognized norms and practices, such as the ISSO standards. The Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology, an independent organization under the supervision of the Minister of Business and Trade, is the standard-developing and conformity assessment body for Qatar. However, Qatari government ministries such as the National Health Authority (NHA), the Ministry of Energy and Industry and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture provide recommendations for standards. The Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology continually develops new standards and criteria for various items and merchandize.

Standards Organizations

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The only standards organization in Qatar is the Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology.

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries.

Notify U.S. is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL:

<http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

Conformity Assessment

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Qatar has laboratories to test construction materials, food and calibration scales. The Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology is charged with the task of developing laboratories and facilities to test electrical equipment and supplies, toys and oil fabrication equipment as well as other items and merchandize. The Departments of Central Laboratories, and Quality and Standards, which are under the supervision of the

General Organization for Standards and Metrology, are the primary testing facilities for Qatar. There are no conformity assessment bodies in Qatar.

Product Certification

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Qatar applies product certification according to ISSO standards 22 and 28. Product certification takes place by way of a conformity certificate from the manufacturer, self-declaration or tests reported by accredited laboratories from exporting country.

Accreditation

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There are no accreditation organizations in Qatar.

Publication of Technical Regulations

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The name of the national gazette is the Government Official Gazette. Proposed regulations are currently not published but final regulations are published and are considered law once listed in the Official Gazette. The General Organization for Standards and Metrology has developed a website that lists all Qatari standards and allows for governments and the private sector to make comments on draft legislation for 60 days. More information can be found at: www.qs.org.qa

Labeling and Marking

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Qatar enforces GCC shelf-life standards GS 150/1993, Part I and II, which combined affect 170 food products. The manufacturer's established shelf life is accepted for other food products. Production and expiry dates must be printed on the original label or container by the manufacturer. Dates cannot be added after the fact via a sticker. Products must arrive at destination with at least half the shelf-life duration remaining. The U.S. supplier should work closely with the importer to ensure compliance with local shelf-life requirements.

Food labels must include product and brand names, production and expiry dates, country of origin, name and address of the manufacturer, net weight in metric units, and a list of the ingredients in descending order of importance. All fats and oils used as ingredients must be specifically identified on the label. Labels for food must be in Arabic or Arabic/English. Arabic stickers are accepted.

Contacts

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Qatar's primary point of contact for matters on standards is the following:

Dr. Mohammed bin Saif Al-Kuwari
General Manager
Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology
P.O. Box 23277

Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (974) 4447-9805; (974) 4440-8686
Fax: (974) 4447-9052

Trade Agreements

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Qatar is a strong supporter of regional integration and has ties with several Arab League member states. Qatar has signed several bilateral agreements to ease trade and investment restrictions with Arab countries in the Gulf and North Africa. Over the past ten years, Qatar has signed bilateral investment protection agreements with several countries, including Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, South Korea, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sudan, Switzerland and Turkey.

As a member of the GCC, Qatar is a signatory to the GCC Free Trade Agreement. This agreement provides duty free access to all goods produced in the GCC States, provided that the goods meet the content requirements (at least 40 percent value added within GCC factories, which are at least 50 percent owned by GCC entities). In January 2003, the GCC implemented a unified customs tariff to facilitate regional trade. The GCC aims to adopt a common currency.

Qatar has not entered into a bilateral investment or taxation treaty with the United States, although there is ongoing interest in exploring a U.S.-Qatar free trade agreement.

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Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Openness to Foreign Investment

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Qatar has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and has the highest per capita income in the world, according to The Economist. Qatar's real GDP growth is estimated to have been approximately 18.7 percent in 2011, according to IMF estimates. The government is heavily involved in Qatar's economy, although it strongly encourages international investment in many sectors such as energy.

Qatar's investment liberalization policies are proceeding on a gradual basis, based on a desire to protect local companies from rapid competition.

The main economic stimuli in Qatar are oil, gas, and related industries, in particular the development of the North Field, the largest non-associated natural gas field in the world. Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry has attracted tens of billions of dollars in foreign investment and made Qatar the world's largest exporter of LNG. Qatar has imposed a moratorium on increasing natural gas production from the North Field that will take effect in 2012 and last until at least 2014. However, the Energy Ministry has indicated that it may increase its LNG production by 10 million tons if it can improve efficiency in its production units. Significant investment in the downstream sector is likely to continue.

Qatar was awarded the right to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This will have a lasting impact on Qatar's real estate, construction, and finance markets as companies scramble

to obtain a portion of the more than USD 150 billion in infrastructure investments needed before 2022. The government has allocated 40 percent of its budget between now and 2016 to infrastructure projects, including USD 11 billion on a new international airport, USD 5.5 billion on a deepwater seaport and USD 12.36 billion on improving and creating road networks. Qatar will also invest USD 20 billion to USD 25 billion in tourism infrastructure development over the next 11 years as it prepares to host the 2022 World Cup. The largest planned development is the USD 29 billion metro and rail project. It will be implemented in three phases with completion scheduled for 2022. Other focal areas include roads, industrial zones, and information and communication technology.

These developments will stimulate the domestic economy and create substantial export opportunities for foreign businesses. In addition to energy and infrastructure development, significant opportunities exist for foreign investment in medical, safety and security, education, and franchising.

Qatar gives preferential treatment to suppliers that use local content in bids for government procurement. When competing for government contracts, goods with Qatari content are discounted by 10 percent and goods from other GCC countries receive a 5 percent discount. As a rule, participation in tenders with a value of QR 1,000,000 or less is confined to local contractors, suppliers and merchants registered by the Qatar Chamber of Commerce, and tenders with a value of more than this amount do not require any local commercial registration to participate, but in practice certain exceptions exist. Tender and bid details are available at the Central Tender Committee website: <http://www.ctc.gov.qa/tender-en.aspx>.

The Investment Law No. 13/2000 is the primary legislation governing foreign investment. Foreign investment is generally limited to 49 percent of the capital for most business activities, with a Qatari partner(s) holding at least 51 percent. However, the law allows, upon special government approval, up to 100 percent ownership by foreign investors in certain sectors, including: agriculture, industry, health, education, tourism, development and exploitation of natural resources, energy, or mining. Qatar amended the law in 2004 to allow foreign investment in the banking and insurance sectors upon approval of the Cabinet of Ministers. Moreover, foreign financial services firms are allowed 100 percent ownership at the Qatar Financial Center (QFC). On October 31, 2009, the Council of Ministers agreed on the amendments proposed by the Ministry of Business and Trade to allow foreign investors to hold 100 percent stakes in certain activities, including: business consultancy and technical services; information and communication services; cultural services; sports services; entertainment services; and distribution services.

International law firms with 15 years of continuous experience in their countries of origin are allowed to set up operations in Qatar, but the license will be granted only if authorities in Qatar are convinced that the field in which the applying firm specializes is of use to Qatar. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Justice, the Cabinet may reduce the number of required years' experience or waive the condition fully. Cabinet Decision Number 57 of 2010 states that the Doha office of an international law firm would be permitted to carry out activities in Qatar only if the main office in the country of origin remains operative. These requirements do not apply to law firms registered in Qatar Financial Center (QFC).

Foreign firms are required to use a local agent for matters related to sponsorship and residence of employees. Certain sectors are not open for domestic or foreign competition, including public transportation, electricity and water, steel, cement, and fuel distribution and marketing. In these sectors, a single semi-public company has complete or predominant control.

Qatar has begun to liberalize its telecommunications sector to permit outside private investment, starting with the issuance in December 2007 of a second mobile license to a consortium including Vodafone and the Qatar Foundation. The same consortium was awarded the country's second fixed-line license in September 2008. However, there is a minimum requirement of QR 200,000 in initial capital for any telecommunication business, which creates a barrier to entry for small entrepreneurs.

When approving majority foreign ownership in a project, the law states that the project should fit into the country's development plans. It adds that preference should be given to projects that use raw materials available in the local market, manufacture products for export, produce a new product or use advanced technology, facilitate the transfer of technology and know-how in Qatar, and promote the development of national human resources.

Non-Qataris may also have the right of land use over real estate for a term of 99 years renewable upon government approval in Cabinet-designated "investment areas." Foreigners can own residential property in select projects, including the Pearl, the West Bay Lagoon, Lusail, and the Al-Khor resort project. Law No. 23/2006 provides for foreigners being issued residency permits without local sponsors if they own residential or business property in Cabinet-designated "investment areas".

Import licenses are issued only to individuals with Qatari nationality, or companies owned or controlled by Qataris. In practice, exceptions are sometimes made for foreign companies, such as those with government contracts.

Qatar remains the second easiest country in which to pay tax globally for the second year running, according to Paying Taxes 2011, an annual report issued by Price Waterhouse Coopers, the World Bank, and the International Finance Corporation. Qatari nationals are not subject to any kind of corporate or income tax, although nationals are required to pay Zakat^[1], which usually amounts to around 2.5 percent of profits. Although there is no income tax on salaries in Qatar, foreign investors are subject to taxation on their investment income.

On January 1, 2010 a new tax law went into effect. This law imposes a 10 percent flat rate for all non-Qatari companies and foreign partners in Qatari companies, except for the energy sector where there is at least a 35 percent tax, unless exempted by Amiri Decree. Companies currently receiving tax holidays or those with government tax exemptions will not be taxed until the contractual end of these agreements. If these agreements were entered into by the Government, ministry, agency, body, or public institution prior to enforcement of the new law and no tax rate was specified, the 35 percent tax rate will be imposed, unless exempted by Amiri Decree. The tax rate and all other tax requirements set forth in agreements related to oil operations will continue to be defined by Law No. 3/2007 on the exploitation of natural wealth and resources.

The new tax law applies to revenues from business activities, contracts – which are partly or wholly implemented in Qatar – properties, including sales of stakes in the shareholding companies or privately-owned companies whose assets are mainly comprised of properties. Revenue from exploration and natural resource extraction in the state and loan interest received within the state are also taxable. Gifts, luxury items, and entertainment expenses are not deductible. Qatari-owned companies; small handicraft companies with a maximum of three workers and not exceeding 100,000 Qatari Riyals profit (USD 27,473); individual income from sources such as bank interest, stock dividends, salaries, wages and allowances; and foreign charitable and other non-profit organizations and associations and societies are all exempted from taxation.

Under Law No. 13 of 2000, the Ministry of Finance and Economy may grant a tax holiday of up to 10 years for new foreign investments in key sectors. Other exemptions may be granted under law 21/2009 on a case-by-case basis for a period up to 6 years.

According to Article 11-2 of law no. 21/2009, payments made to non-residents for activities not connected with a permanent establishment in the state (Qatar) shall be subject to a final withholding tax, as follows: 5 percent of gross royalties and technical fees; 7 percent of the gross interest, commissions, brokerage fees, director's fees, attendance fees and any other payments for services carried out wholly or partly in Qatar. However, the enforcement of this article is currently frozen while the government reviews a written petition submitted by the Qatari banks.

Companies established in the QFC have enjoyed a tax exemption since the start of operations in 2005 until 31/12/2009. The Qatar Financial Centre's new tax regime, levying a flat 10 percent on profits, came into force in 2010, but captive insurance, reinsurance and asset management businesses are exempt.

There are two types of penalties for failing to pay taxes: penalties associated with delays in filing, and delays in payment. Companies that fail to file their tax return will be fined QR 100 per day up to a maximum of QR 36,000. Those convicted of making false statements on their taxes, or trying to evade taxes face up to three months' imprisonment and a maximum fine of QR 15,000. A further fine of 20 percent of the tax due will be levied on companies shown to be in violation of the tax law. Penalties may be doubled for repeat offenders. Delayed payment may result in a financial penalty equal to the amount of unpaid tax, in addition to the payment of the tax due.

Judicial decisions in commercial disputes are primarily based on contractual agreements, provided these agreements are not in conflict with applicable Qatari laws. U.S. firms are strongly encouraged to consult a local attorney before concluding any commercial agreement with a local entity.

Foreign investors and GCC nationals may only own 25 percent of the shares in all companies listed on the Qatar Exchange (QE). Foreign investors are generally not allowed to participate in any initial public offering (IPO), though exceptions are occasionally made on a case-by-case basis (primarily for other GCC nationals). Those rules of foreign ownership percentage restrictions can be waived with approval from the Cabinet. In 2009, NYSE Euronext purchased a 20 percent stake in the QE for USD 200 million in cash. The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) owns the remaining 80 percent of the QE.

QE has 42 listed companies and its market capitalization was valued at QR 445 billion at the end of June 2011. The foreign ownership of shares usually hovers around 11 percent, with most owned by other GCC citizens or local expatriates. The Mutual Fund Law (Law. No 25/2002) allows expatriates to invest indirectly in the stock market. No bonds have been traded on the Qatar Exchange so far.

There are 18 licensed banks in Qatar, 11 of which are Qatari institutions including four Islamic banks (Qatar Islamic Bank "QIB", Qatar International Islamic Bank "QIIB", Masraf Al Rayan and Barwa Bank) and 7 commercial banks (Qatar National Bank "QNB", Commercial Bank of Qatar, Doha Bank, Ahli Bank, International Bank of Qatar "IBQ", Qatar Development Bank "QDB", Al Khaliji Bank).

Qatari regulations for local and foreign banks are the same. New licenses for new banks are available through application to the Qatar Central Bank. License requirements can be found at the following link:

<http://www.qcb.gov.qa/English/SupervisionApproach/LicensingAndRegistration/Pages/Licensing.aspx>

Qatar also has 20 exchange houses, three investment companies and three commercial finance companies.

In addition, Doha is home to the Qatar Financial Center (QFC) which allows major international financial institutions and corporations to set up offices with 100 percent foreign ownership, and all profits to be remitted outside of Qatar. Firms licensed by the QFC can locate anywhere in Doha, provided there is no objection from the Ministry of Business and Trade, and pay local market rents. As 2011, there were over 37 approved sites.

There are currently 129 licensed firms at the QFC, representing a spectrum of banks, investment companies, insurance houses, and related professional services. Sixty-four (nearly 50 percent of) QFC licensed firms are regulated by QFCRA, the QFC's independent regulatory body. QFC firms are generally limited to providing services to wholesale clients. However, insurance companies can provide services to both wholesale and retail clients and retail asset management is allowed as of January 1 2011.

Qatar's economic freedom score is 70.5, and ranks 27th in the 2011 Index of Economic Freedom. Its score is 1.5 points better than last year, reflecting notable improvements in five of the 10 economic freedoms. Qatar is ranked 2nd out of 17 countries in the Middle East/North Africa region, and its overall score is above the world and regional averages.

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Index/Ranking - Year 2011</i>
Transparency International Corruption Index	22
Heritage Economic Freedom	27
World Bank Doing Business:	
Ease of Doing Business	38
Starting a Business	124

Dealing with Construction Permits	24
Employing Workers	67
Registering Property	37
Getting Credit	130
Protecting Investors	93
Paying Taxes	2
Trading Across Borders	47
Enforcing Contracts	97
Closing a Business	33 (2010)

Conversion and Transfer Policies

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Due to minimal demand for the Qatari riyal outside Qatar and the national economy's dependence on oil and gas revenues, which are priced in dollars, the government has pegged the riyal to the U.S. currency. The official peg is QR 1.00 per USD 0.27 or USD 1.00 per QR 3.64, as set by the government in June 1980 and reaffirmed by an Amiri decree issued July 9, 2001.

Officially, the GCC states are harmonizing their monetary policies and intend to begin implementation of a common currency. In January 2010 the Qatar Central Bank stopped providing loans to the public sector in preparation for implementing the GCC unified currency plan. However, at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit held in Abu Dhabi in December 2010, participants indicated that there are still significant obstacles to achieving a single currency. Despite a number of recent private sector analyses suggesting Qatar may reassess its dollar peg policy, the government has maintained the exchange rate.

Law No. 15/1990 does not allow foreign investors to enter into a joint stock company with Qatari partners. However, foreign investors can hold up to a combined total of 25 percent of the shares of Qatari companies listed on the Qatari Exchange. In addition, at least three foreign companies have been allowed to exceed this 25 percent. Exceptions are based upon a ministerial decree and are decided on a case-by-case basis. Foreign investors may own up to 49 percent, and the Qatari partners no less than 51 percent, of a limited liability partnership. Foreign partners in ventures organized as limited liability partnerships must pay the full amount of their contribution to capital in cash, or in kind, prior to the start of operations. Usually, such firms are required to set aside 10 percent of profits each year in a statutory reserve until it equals 50 percent of the venture's authorized capital. The legal reserve shall not be distributed among the shareholders; however the excess of the half of the paid-in capital may be used in distributing the profits among the shareholders (up to 5 percent of profits). This requirement is the only legal restriction to a foreign company desiring to repatriate all of its annual profit after tax deduction.

Qatar neither delays remittance of foreign investment returns nor restricts transfer of funds associated with an investment, such as return on dividends, return of capital, interest and principal payments on private foreign debt, lease payments, royalties and

management fees, amounts generated from sale or liquidation, amounts garnered from settlements and disputes, and compensation from expropriation to financial institutions outside Qatar without undue delay.

Qatar Central Bank authorized mobile phone service providers Qtel and Vodafone to add payment services and money transfers via mobile phones in direct collaboration with banks and licensed money exchangers in Qatar.

The Government of Qatar signed a new Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorism Finance (AML/CFT) law into force on April 30, 2010. The law addresses many of the deficiencies identified by FATF and makes money laundering and terrorist financing offences in line with international standards. It also introduces a suspicious transaction reporting regime and requirements for consumer due diligence and record-keeping. Consistent revised regulations have been issued by all three of the main financial regulators in Qatar: the Qatar Central Bank (QCB), the Qatar Financial Markets Authority (QFMA), and the Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority (QFCRA). All three regulators have begun to do on-site inspections to check compliance with the new law and regulations. However, significant work remains to implement the new financial regulations and there remain some deficiencies with regards to terrorism financing.

In accordance with the QCB instructions on AML/CFT, the financial institutions must apply due diligence prior to establishing business relationships. Certain originator information should be secured in case the wire transfer exceeds QR 4,000. Similarly, due diligence should be made when a customer is carrying out occasional transactions in a single or several linked operations of an amount exceeding QR 55,000 or equivalent in foreign currencies at the relevant time as per the provisions of Article 23 of Law 4 of 2010.

Expropriation and Compensation

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Law No. 13/2000, Article 8 states: 1) Foreign investment shall neither directly nor indirectly be subject to expropriation unless such measures are for the public welfare and implemented in a non-discriminatory way, against a prompt and reasonable compensation; 2) Compensation shall be equal to the market value of the investment at the time of expropriation, and shall be paid without undue delay. There have been no cases of expropriation or sequestration of foreign investment in Qatar since the nationalization in the mid-1970s of Shell and Dukhan Services (the latter was a combination of six international oil companies handling Qatar's onshore operations on the country's west coast). The foreign interests were compensated promptly.

Dispute Settlement

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In March 2003, Qatar became a signatory to the New York Convention of 1958 and in November 2010, Qatar ratified its membership to the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). If investment disputes occur, Qatar accepts binding international arbitration between the government and foreign investors. However, Qatari courts do not enforce judgments of other courts in disputes emanating from investment agreements made under the jurisdiction of other nations.

In December 2010, the civil and commercial court, and the regulatory tribunal, for Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) were officially launched. Together they form the QFC Judiciary and the legal infrastructure behind the QFC. In addition, the court also features an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) center. Although primarily concerned with hearing commercial matters arising from within the QFC itself, the QFC intends to expand courts' jurisdiction to enable it to accept other disputes at their discretion.

In Qatar there are two concurrent bankruptcy regimes. The first is the local regime, the provisions of which are set out in the Commercial Law No 27 of 2006. However, the bankruptcy law is largely untested. The bankruptcy of a Qatari citizen or a Qatari-owned company is rarely announced and the Government sometimes plays the role of guarantor to keep bankrupt business running and safeguard creditors' rights.

The second bankruptcy regime is found in the QFC Insolvency Regulations 2005 and applies to bodies corporate and branches registered in the QFC. There are currently two firms in the U.K. offering full dissolution bankruptcy services to QFC-registered companies.

In order to protect their interests, U.S. firms are advised to consult with a Qatari or foreign-based law firm when executing contracts with local parties.

Performance Requirements and Incentives

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Performance requirements for foreign investment in Qatar, including a counter-trade offset program, do not exist. While screening investment proposals, the government may indicate preferences for locating facilities, capital investments and other matters. Disclosure of financial and employment data is required, but proprietary information is not.

The government offers a variety of incentives to foreign investors which may include tax exemptions, property grants, energy subsidies, and low-cost financing. The following is a list of incentives sometimes offered to foreign investors:

- Natural gas priced at 60-75 U.S. cents per MBTU (Million British Thermal Units)
- Electricity offered at less than two U.S. cents per KWH (Kilowatt Hour)
- Industrial land offered at 27 U.S. cents per square meter per year for a period of 50 years, including options for renewing the lease
- Exemption from customs duties on imports of machinery, equipment and spare parts;
- Exemption on export duties
- Exemption from corporate taxes for up to ten years
- Exemption from income taxes
- Absence of quotas on imports
- Low cost financing through Qatar Development Bank

- Flexible immigration and employment rules to enable the import of foreign labor

The same incentives are offered to Qatari investors.

Qatar does not maintain measures inconsistent with the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), though in practice they provide preferential treatment for those who use local content in investments or government procurements.

The Ministry of Energy and Industry determines the amount of foreign equity and the extent of incentives for industrial projects. Industrial projects can be established only in designated industrial zones. Necessary investment approvals may be required from the Ministry of Health, Qatar Tourism Authority, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Agriculture, Ministry of Business and Trade, Supreme Education Council, and Ministry of Environment.

Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) is the national agency charged with executing applied research and delivering commercialized technologies in four themed areas. They have developed centers for each of the following areas: Energy, Environment, Health Sciences and Information & Communication Technologies. QSTP is located in Qatar Foundation's Education City and has access to the resources of its cluster of universities. In addition to QSTP's four centers, members include small companies, international corporations, and research institutions. QSTP seeks to attract U.S. and other foreign investors to start up research and development facilities in the Park, and provide opportunities for companies to engage in commercializing the technology they develop. Participating companies are allowed 100 percent foreign ownership, and exemption from payment of income tax. **Microsoft, ExxonMobil, GE, Shell, Tata, Total, and ConocoPhillips** are among QSTP member companies.

Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

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The Commercial Companies Law, Law No. 5/2002, controls the establishment of all private business concerns in Qatar. The law provides for corporate mergers, corporate bonds, and the conversion of corporate partnerships into joint stock companies.

Joint ventures involving foreign partners usually take the form of limited liability partnerships. Law No. 15/1990 does not allow foreign investors to enter into a joint stock company with Qatari partners. However there are exceptions as mentioned in the "CONVERSION AND TRANSFER POLICIES" section above.

Foreigners are generally not allowed to own property. However, a law enacted in 2004 allows foreigners to own residential property in select projects including the Pearl, Lusail, the West Bay Lagoon, and the Al-Khor resort project.

Non-Qataris may also have the right of usufruct over real estate for a term of 99 years in Cabinet-designated "investment areas." Non-Qataris can be issued residency permits without a local sponsor if they own residential or business property in the designated districts. Citizens of members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar,

Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) also have some exemptions from the application of the foreign investment laws of Qatar, including the ability to own 50 percent of businesses, as opposed to 49 percent for other foreigners, and the ability to own freehold land in three designated zones – Lusail, Al Khuraj, and Thayleeb Mountain.

Protection of Property Rights

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Within Qatar, owners of trademarks, copyrights and patents depend on Qatari laws and regulations for protection. Intellectual property rights in Qatar are protected by Law No. 7/2002 (Copyright and Neighboring Rights Law), Law No.30 of 2006 (Patent's Law), Law No. 9/2002 (Trademarks and Geographical Indicators Law), Law No.5/2005 (Protection of Trade Secrets), and Law No. 6/2005 (Protection of Layout Design of Integrated Circuits).

Qatar adopted the GCC Patent Law and has assigned the Industrial Property Office in the Ministry of Business and Trade Authority to handle issues related to trademarks, commercial indications, trade names, geographical indications and industrial design. An Intellectual Property Centre was also established by Amiri decision No. 53 of 2009 and is affiliated with the Ministry of Justice. This center oversees implementation of Qatari law on patents, copyright protection, and protection of trade secrets.

According to Law No. 30 of 2006, patents are valid for twenty years from the date of submission. The Ministry of Health requires registration of all pharmaceutical products imported into the country and will not register unauthorized copies of products patented in other countries.

The 2002 copyright law does not explicitly provide for national treatment or coverage of unpublished works and does not criminalize end-user piracy. However Qatar is party to the Berne and Paris Conventions and abides by their mandates concerning unpublished works.

As for end-users, some Qatari companies have already complied with the law and others are making provisions to do so. The Copyright Office works with law enforcement authorities to prosecute resellers of unlicensed video and software. In 2011, the IP center carried out 55 raids.

Qatar uses the GCC patent law with derogations as needed to comply with its obligations under the TRIPS Agreement. A joint committee between the Ministry of Business and Trade and Ministry of Health has yet to be established to coordinate their efforts and ensure that only patented products or authorized copies of pharmaceutical products are registered for sale.

In 2006, an Amiri Decree on patents was issued stipulating that: (1) only inventions of industrial use can be registered as a patent; (2) an industrial product or means or process of production must have something innovative about it to merit patent registration; (3) inventions in health, agriculture, plants and software development are not eligible for patent; (4) only Qatari citizens or foreigners of WTO signatory countries will be allowed to register a patent; (5) the Ministry of Business and Trade will frame and

implement executive regulations to help enforce the law; and (6) the Ministry of Business and Trade will set up a patent registration office. This office has been established and named the Patents Unit and is a part of the Intellectual Property centre.

As part of the GCC Customs Union, the six Member States are working toward unifying their intellectual property regimes. In this respect, the GCC has recently approved a common trademark law. All six Member States are expected to adopt this law as national legislation in order to implement it. However, the new law raises questions about consistency with GCC Member State obligations under the TRIPS Agreement and U.S. free trade agreements with Bahrain and Oman.

Qatar is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and is a signatory to the following WIPO Treaties:

- WIPO Convention, since September 1976
- Paris Convention (Industrial Property), since July 2000
- Berne Convention (Literary and Artistic Works), since July 2000
- Nairobi Treaty (Olympic Symbol), since July 1983
- WCT (WIPO Copyright Treaty), since October 2005
- WPPT (WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty), since October 2005
- Qatar has also been a member and signatory to the TRIPS Agreement since January 1996

Transparency of Regulatory System

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There are four regulatory bodies in Qatar, though plans are underway to create a unified regulatory authority for the country. It remains unclear when the necessary legislation and oversight board will be in place. Current regulatory entities include:

- The Qatar Financial Market Authority regulates the Qatar Exchange (formerly known as the Doha Securities Markets)
- The Central Bank regulates locally registered banks
- The QFC Regulatory Authority has a separate, independent regulatory authority for QFC-registered firms
- The Ministry of Business and Trade regulates the local insurance sector

In Qatar, the government is the major buyer and end-user of a wide range of products and services. Government procurement regulations provide a ten-percent preference for Qatari products and five-percent for GCC products.

The Central Tenders Committee (CTC) of the Ministry of Finance and Economy is responsible for processing the majority of public sector tenders. The CTC applies standard tendering procedures and adheres to established performance norms. It also sets the standards for rules and regulations for bidding procedures.

In tenders valued in excess of QR 100 million (USD 27 million), the CTC may invite and pre-qualify international firms to bid for a specific product or service. Technical bids submitted to the CTC are referred to the appropriate government end-user for short-listing. The CTC then opens the commercial bids and recommends the lowest priced, technically qualified bidder to the entity concerned, which will make the final award decision. Inquiries about specific award decisions should be directed to the CTC.

Some governmental entities have established internal tender committees. The Ministry of Energy and Industry, Qatar Petroleum, Urban Planning and Development Authority, and Public Works Authority process all tenders independently. Qatar Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior are responsible for issuing tenders for classified materials and services.

Foreign firms wishing to participate in government procurement programs may be required to have a local agent and provide bid and performance bonds. International bidders should contact end-users directly for information on local agent requirements.

Other regulatory policies do not significantly affect foreign investment decisions. Some U.S. companies have expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in government procurement.

Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

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In Qatar, there are no restrictions on the flow of capital. The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) adheres to conservative policies aimed at maintaining steady economic growth and a stable banking sector. Loans are allocated on market terms, and foreign companies are essentially treated the same as local companies.

Qatar National Bank (QNB), 50 percent state-owned, is the largest bank in the country, with total assets equal to 45 percent of the total assets of all Qatari Banks (local) and 37 percent of total equity of eleven Qatari Banks (local) as of September 2011. The total assets grew since September 2010 to QR 280.1 billion, representing an increase of QR 85.4 billion or 43.9 percent.

The following represents Qatar banking sector assets, based on QCB data:

- Total Assets of Banking Sector (Qatari and foreign Banks):
- December 2010 QR 567,482 million - increase by 17.55 percent over December 2009
- October 2011 QR 653,617million
- Total Assets of Local Qatari Banks:
- October 2011 QR 620,980 million
- Total Assets of Local Commercial Banks:
- October 2011 QR 469,068 million - 72 percent of total banking sector assets
- Total Assets of Branches of Foreign Banks:
- October 2011 QR 32,637 million - 4.99 percent of total banking sector assets.

Almost all import transactions are controlled by standard letters of credit processed by local banks and their correspondent banks in the exporting countries. Credit facilities are provided to local and foreign investors within the framework of standard international banking practices. Foreign investors are usually required to have a guarantee from their local sponsor/local equity partner.

However, in accordance with QCB guidelines, banks operating in Qatar give priority to Qataris and to public development projects in their financing operations. Additionally, single customers may not be extended credit facilities by a bank exceeding 20 percent of the bank's capital and reserves. In addition, the Qatar Central Bank does not allow cross-sharing and stable shareholder arrangements among banks and other business concerns that result in fewer shares of some corporations actually trading freely in the market. QCB requires banks to maintain a maximum credit ratio of 90 percent.

Competition from State Owned Enterprises

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Several state-owned companies still operate under monopoly, or exclusive rights in some economic sectors. The following are Qatar's major state-owned enterprises:

- Qatar Public Telecommunications Corporation (Qtel) is a dominant player in the Qatari telecoms market and is 76 percent owned by Qataris. Its revenues from outside Qatar currently constitute more than 75 percent of its revenues. In 2007, the mobile products and services sector was opened to competition. In 2008, the fixed line telecoms market was also liberalized. Vodafone was selected to compete in both mobile and fixed line against Qtel, and is 96 percent-owned by Qataris. Both companies are listed in the Qatar Exchange (QE). Prior to 2007, both the mobile and fixed line telecoms markets in Qatar were dominated by Qtel.
- Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) operates all water and electricity activities and is 90 percent owned by Qataris. The government owns 43 percent of the capital. The government has indicated that it may privatize segments of the water and electricity sectors. A first step in this direction occurred when the Ras Laffan Power Company, which is 55 percent owned by a U.S. company, was established in 2001.
- Qatar Petroleum (QP) operates all oil and gas activities and is wholly owned by the government. QP's oil and gas fields fall into three categories - the North Gas Field, onshore oil, and offshore oil. In addition, QP carries out activities through the following subsidiaries, joint ventures and other investments:
 - Al-Koot Insurance & Reinsurance
 - Al-Shaheen Energy Services (ASES)
 - Amwaj Catering Services
 - Gasal
 - Gulf Drilling International (GDI)

- Gulf Helicopters
 - Industries Qatar
 - Laffan Refinery
 - Oryx GTL
 - Qatar Aluminium (Qatalum)
 - Qatar Chemical Company (Q-Chem)
 - Qatar Fertiliser Company (QAFCO)
 - Qatar Fuel Additives Company (QAFAC)
 - Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Ltd. (Qatargas)
 - Qatar Melamine Company
 - Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO)
 - Qatar Petroleum International (QPI)
 - Qatar Steel Company (QASCO)
 - Qatar Vinyl Company (QVC)
 - Qatofin
 - Q-Chem 2
 - Ras Laffan Olefins Company (RLOC)
 - Ras Laffan Power Company (RLPC)
 - RasGas
 - SEEF
- Tasweeq has the exclusive right to deliver Qatar's energy products abroad.
 - Qatar General Postal Corporation (QPost) is the state-owned postal company. Several other delivery companies are allowed to compete in this courier market: Aramex, DHL Express, and Fedex Express.
 - Qatar Airways is the country's designated National Carrier and is 50 percent owned by the government.
 - The subsidiaries of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the State of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, also play a prominent role in the local economy:
 - Qatari Diar, a property investment vehicle;
 - Qatar Holding, the direct strategic investment arm of QIA
 - Hassad Food, a vehicle for investment in agriculture and livestock

In June 7, 2010 Qatar notified the WTO that it does not maintain any state trading enterprises (STEs), under the working definition that STEs are governmental and non-governmental enterprises, including marketing boards, which have been granted exclusive or special rights or privileges, including statutory or constitutional powers, in the exercise of which they influence through their purchases or sales the level or direction of imports or exports.

The government's economic strategy, as expressed in its 2030 Qatar Vision, is to reduce the dependence of the country's budget on oil and gas.

Corporate Social Responsibility

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There is a general awareness of corporate social responsibility principles. Those firms that pursue CSR are viewed favorably. The Ministry of Business and Trade announced last year that it has plans to introduce a corporate social responsibility index for companies listed on Qatar Exchange in order to measure their “social commitment”. Many companies in Qatar are now considering publishing sustainability reports, including their CSR initiatives, in conjunction with their annual reports.

Political Violence

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Qatar is politically stable. The crime rate is low. There are no political parties, labor unions or trade associations. There is no known organized domestic political opposition. The U.S. government believes the potential exists for acts of transnational terrorism to occur in Qatar. Potential investors and U.S. citizens are encouraged to stay in close contact with the Embassy for up-to-date threat information.

Corruption

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Corruption, including bribery, raises the costs and risks of doing business. Corruption has a corrosive impact on both market opportunities overseas for U.S. companies and the broader business climate. It also deters international investment, stifles economic growth and development, distorts prices, and undermines the rule of law.

It is important for U.S. companies, irrespective of their size, to assess the business climate in the relevant market in which they will be operating or investing, and to have an effective compliance program or measures to prevent and detect corruption, including foreign bribery. U.S. individuals and firms operating or investing in foreign markets should take the time to become familiar with the relevant anticorruption laws of both the foreign country and the United States in order to properly comply with them, and where appropriate, they should seek the advice of legal counsel.

The U.S. Government seeks to level the global playing field for U.S. businesses by encouraging other countries to take steps to criminalize their own companies’ acts of corruption, including bribery of foreign public officials, by requiring them to uphold their obligations under relevant international conventions. A U. S. firm that believes a competitor is seeking to use bribery of a foreign public official to secure a contract should bring this to the attention of appropriate U.S. agencies, as noted below.

U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: In 1977, the United States enacted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which makes it unlawful for a U.S. person, and certain foreign issuers of securities, to make a corrupt payment to foreign public officials for the purpose of obtaining or retaining business for or with, or directing business to, any person. The FCPA also applies to foreign firms and persons who take any act in furtherance of such a corrupt payment while in the United States. For more detailed information on the FCPA, see the FCPA Lay-Person’s Guide at:
<http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/>

Other Instruments: It is U.S. Government policy to promote good governance, including host country implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption laws and policies pursuant to their obligations under international agreements. Since enactment of the FCPA, the United States has been instrumental to the expansion of the international framework to fight corruption. Several significant components of this framework are the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (OECD Antibribery Convention), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UN Convention), the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), the Council of Europe Criminal and Civil Law Conventions, and a growing list of U.S. free trade agreements. This country is party to [add instrument to which this country is party], but generally all countries prohibit the bribery and solicitation of their public officials.

OECD Antibribery Convention: The OECD Antibribery Convention entered into force in February 1999. As of March 2009, there are 38 parties to the Convention including the United States (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/13/40272933.pdf>). Major exporters China, India, and Russia are not parties, although the U.S. Government strongly endorses their eventual accession to the Convention. The Convention obligates the Parties to criminalize bribery of foreign public officials in the conduct of international business. The United States meets its international obligations under the OECD Antibribery Convention through the U.S. FCPA. [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the OECD Convention.]

UN Convention: The UN Anticorruption Convention entered into force on December 14, 2005, and there are 158 parties to it as of November 2011 (see <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/signatories.html>). The UN Convention is the first global comprehensive international anticorruption agreement. The UN Convention requires countries to establish criminal and other offences to cover a wide range of acts of corruption. The UN Convention goes beyond previous anticorruption instruments, covering a broad range of issues ranging from basic forms of corruption such as bribery and solicitation, embezzlement, trading in influence to the concealment and laundering of the proceeds of corruption. The Convention contains transnational business bribery provisions that are functionally similar to those in the OECD Antibribery Convention and contains provisions on private sector auditing and books and records requirements. Other provisions address matters such as prevention, international cooperation, and asset recovery. [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the UN Convention.]

OAS Convention: In 1996, the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the first international anticorruption legal instrument, the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), which entered into force in March 1997. The OAS Convention, among other things, establishes a set of preventive measures against corruption, provides for the criminalization of certain acts of corruption, including transnational bribery and illicit enrichment, and contains a series of provisions to strengthen the cooperation between its States Parties in areas such as mutual legal assistance and technical cooperation. As of December 2009, the OAS Convention has 34 parties (see <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Sigs/b-58.html>) [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the OAS Convention.]

Council of Europe Criminal Law and Civil Law Conventions: Many European countries are parties to either the Council of Europe (CoE) Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Civil Law Convention, or both. The Criminal Law Convention requires criminalization of a wide range of national and transnational conduct, including bribery, money-laundering, and account offenses. It also incorporates provisions on liability of legal persons and witness protection. The Civil Law Convention includes provisions on compensation for damage relating to corrupt acts, whistleblower protection, and validity of contracts, inter alia. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) was established in 1999 by the CoE to monitor compliance with these and related anti-corruption standards. Currently, GRECO comprises 49 member States (48 European countries and the United States). As of December 2011, the Criminal Law Convention has 43 parties and the Civil Law Convention has 34 (see www.coe.int/greco.) [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the Council of Europe Conventions.]

Free Trade Agreements: While it is U.S. Government policy to include anticorruption provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that it negotiates with its trading partners, the anticorruption provisions have evolved over time. The most recent FTAs negotiated now require trading partners to criminalize “active bribery” of public officials (offering bribes to any public official must be made a criminal offense, both domestically and trans-nationally) as well as domestic “passive bribery” (solicitation of a bribe by a domestic official). All U.S. FTAs may be found at the U.S. Trade Representative Website: <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>. [Insert information as to whether your country has an FTA with the United States: Country [X] has a free trade agreement (FTA) in place with the United States, the [name of FTA], which came into force. Consult USTR Website for date: <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>.]

Local Laws: U.S. firms should familiarize themselves with local anticorruption laws, and, where appropriate, seek legal counsel. While the U.S. Department of Commerce cannot provide legal advice on local laws, the Department’s U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide assistance with navigating the host country’s legal system and obtaining a list of local legal counsel.

Assistance for U.S. Businesses: The U.S. Department of Commerce offers several services to aid U.S. businesses seeking to address business-related corruption issues. For example, the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide services that may assist U.S. companies in conducting their due diligence as part of the company’s overarching compliance program when choosing business partners or agents overseas. The U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service can be reached directly through its offices in every major U.S. and foreign city, or through its Website at www.trade.gov/cs.

The Departments of Commerce and State provide worldwide support for qualified U.S. companies bidding on foreign government contracts through the Commerce Department’s Advocacy Center and State’s Office of Commercial and Business Affairs. Problems, including alleged corruption by foreign governments or competitors, encountered by U.S. companies in seeking such foreign business opportunities can be brought to the attention of appropriate U.S. government officials, including local embassy personnel and through the Department of Commerce Trade Compliance Center “Report A Trade Barrier” Website at tcc.export.gov/Report_a_Barrier/index.asp.

Guidance on the U.S. FCPA: The Department of Justice's (DOJ) FCPA Opinion Procedure enables U.S. firms and individuals to request a statement of the Justice Department's present enforcement intentions under the anti-bribery provisions of the FCPA regarding any proposed business conduct. The details of the opinion procedure are available on DOJ's Fraud Section Website at www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa. Although the Department of Commerce has no enforcement role with respect to the FCPA, it supplies general guidance to U.S. exporters who have questions about the FCPA and about international developments concerning the FCPA. For further information, see the Office of the Chief Counsel for International Counsel, U.S. Department of Commerce, Website, at http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html. More general information on the FCPA is available at the Websites listed below.

Exporters and investors should be aware that generally all countries prohibit the bribery of their public officials, and prohibit their officials from soliciting bribes under domestic laws. Most countries are required to criminalize such bribery and other acts of corruption by virtue of being parties to various international conventions discussed above.

Bribery is a crime in Qatar and the law imposes penalties for public officials convicted of taking action in return for monetary or personal gain, or for other parties who take actions to influence or attempt to influence a public official through monetary or personal gain. The current Penal Code (Law No. 11/2004) governs corruption law and stipulates that individuals convicted of bribery may receive up to ten years imprisonment and a fine not greater than the amount of the bribes but not less than 5,000 Qatari Riyals (USD 1,374).

Those convicted of embezzlement and damage to the public treasury is subject to terms of imprisonment of no less than 5 and no more than 10 years. The penalty is enhanced to a minimum term of 7 and a maximum term of 15 years if the perpetrator is a public official in charge of collecting taxes or exercising fiduciary responsibilities over public monies. Investigations into allegations of corruption are handled by the Qatar State Security Bureau (QSS) and Public Prosecution. Final judgments are made by the criminal court. Qatari officials are working to establish a more open and transparent system in government procurement.

By Amiri Decree No. 17/2007, Qatar ratified the UN Convention for Combating Corruption, and Amiri Decree No. 84/2007 established a National Committee for Integrity and Transparency. The permanent committee is headed by the chairman of the Audit Bureau and is tasked with combating corruption in Qatar and reports directly to him. Qatar is not a party to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials. Qatar launched the Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law Center on December 11, 2011 in Doha in partnership with the United Nations.

Qatar has retained its position as the least corrupt country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Qatar was ranked 22nd globally with a score of 7.2, while last year global ranking was 22 with a score of 7.7.

On November 29, 2011 an Amiri Decree No 75/2011 was issued ordering the establishment of a Administrative Control and Transparency Authority. Deputy Prime

Minister and Chief of the Amiri Diwan H.E. Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiya has been appointed as its Chairman. The Authority will have within its jurisdiction private sector companies that provide public services. The objectives of the Authority are to help prevent official corruption and ensure that the various ministries, state agencies and their arms as well as their officials operate with transparency. The Authority is to be autonomous and accountable only to the Emir, who will be approving an annual budget for the body prepared by its chairman. The authority is charged with investigating alleged crimes against public property or finances perpetrated by public officials. U.S. investors and Qatari nationals, if they are agents of U.S. firms, are subject to the provisions of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Anti-Corruption Resources

Some useful resources for individuals and companies regarding combating corruption in global markets include the following:

- Information about the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), including a “Lay-Person’s Guide to the FCPA” is available at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Website at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa>.
- Information about the OECD Antibribery Convention including links to national implementing legislation and country monitoring reports is available at: http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en_2649_34859_1_1_1_1_1,00.html. See also new Antibribery Recommendation and Good Practice Guidance Annex for companies: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/40/44176910.pdf>.
- General information about anticorruption initiatives, such as the OECD Convention and the FCPA, including translations of the statute into several languages, is available at the Department of Commerce Office of the Chief Counsel for International Commerce Website: http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html.
- Transparency International (TI) publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures the perceived level of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world. The CPI is available at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009. TI also publishes an annual *Global Corruption Report* which provides a systematic evaluation of the state of corruption around the world. It includes an in-depth analysis of a focal theme, a series of country reports that document major corruption related events and developments from all continents and an overview of the latest research findings on anti-corruption diagnostics and tools. See <http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr>.
- The World Bank Institute publishes Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). These indicators assess six dimensions of governance in 213 countries, including Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption. See <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>. The World Bank Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Surveys may also be of interest and are available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/BEEPS>.

- The World Economic Forum publishes the *Global Enabling Trade Report*, which presents the rankings of the Enabling Trade Index, and includes an assessment of the transparency of border administration (focused on bribe payments and corruption) and a separate segment on corruption and the regulatory environment. See <http://www.weforum.org/s?s=global+enabling+trade+report>.
- Additional country information related to corruption can be found in the U.S. State Department's annual *Human Rights Report* available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>.
- Global Integrity, a nonprofit organization, publishes its annual *Global Integrity Report*, which provides indicators for 106 countries with respect to governance and anti-corruption. The report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of national level anti-corruption systems. The report is available at: <http://report.globalintegrity.org/>.

Bilateral Investment Agreements

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Qatar has more than 40 international investment cooperation agreements, listed below. Fourteen have been enabled including those signed with Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, China, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Romania, Switzerland and Turkey:

- 1996 (Algeria, France, Germany, Romania and Tunisia)
- 1998 (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Senegal and Sudan)
- 1999 (Chad, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Morocco, Pakistan and South Korea)
- 2000 (Eritrea, Indonesia, Italy and Yemen)
- 2001 (Belarus, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, Switzerland and Turkey)
- 2002 (Armenia, Gambia, and Mali)
- 2003 (Mauritania, South Africa and Syria)
- 2004 (Libya)
- 2007 (Azerbaijan, Belgium & Luxembourg, Mongolia, Russian Federation and Tajikistan)
- 2008 (Cyprus and Kazakhstan)
- 2009 (Jordan, Montenegro, and Portugal)
- 2010 (Lebanon and Panama)

On the trade and economic side Qatar signed several Technical, Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement with the following countries:

- 2000 (Cuba, Lebanon, Yemen, and Eritrea)
- 2001 (Belarus)
- 2002 (Finland, Ukraine, Mali, South Africa, Gambia, Armenia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Niger)
- 2003 (Mauritania)
- 2004 (Libya, and Azerbaijan)

- 2005 (Germany and Nepal)
- 2007 (Mongolia, Greece, Vietnam, Singapore, and Tajikistan)
- 2008 (Cyprus and Philippine)
- 2009 (Albania (ratified), Croatia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Belarus)
- 2010 (Congo, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Slovenia)
- 2011 (Chad)

On November 5, 2005, Qatar and Singapore signed a free trade agreement. Both countries continue to work to finalize the text of the agreement.

Qatar has 33 Agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation.

Qatar has not entered into a bilateral investment, trade, or taxation treaty with the U.S. However, Qatar and the U.S. did sign a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in April 2004.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs [Return to top](#)

Due to concerns about labor practices in Qatar, OPIC suspended its operations in Qatar in 1995. However, Qatar is working to improve its labor standards in order to reinstate OPIC coverage.

Qatar has no plans to become a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

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According to the World Bank Migration & Remittances Fact Book 2011, Qatar has the world's highest level of immigrants, relative to population, with expats making up 87 percent of the country's population. Qatar's labor force consists primarily of expatriate workers.

Qatar's current population is estimated at around 1.7 million, doubling in the last four years. Qatari citizens are estimated to number less than 250,000 - less than one-sixth of the total population. The largest group of foreign workers comes from the Indian sub-continent. The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor regulate recruitment of expatriate labor, but Qatar's plan to develop its own manpower resources continues to receive attention at all government levels.

The 2004 labor law and subsequent regulations provide for the right of Qatari citizens to form workers' committees in private enterprises with more than 100 Qatari citizen workers. Non-citizens are not eligible to form worker committees. Those working in the government sector, Qatari and non-Qatari, are prohibited from joining unions. Further, the law and regulations permit only a single national trade union structure and forbid affiliation with groups outside the country.

These restrictions mean that, in practice, no labor unions currently exist. Under the labor law, workers are granted the right to bargain collectively and to sign joint agreements, i.e., agreements reached between employer and worker regarding a work-related issue.

The right is circumscribed by the government's control over the rules and procedures of the bargaining and agreement processes. Collective bargaining is not freely practiced, and there are no workers employed under collective bargaining contracts. The law also grants workers the right to strike, but the restrictive conditions imposed by the statute make the likelihood of an approved strike extremely remote.

Unapproved and spontaneous strikes are an occasional occurrence, though they are typically confined to the industrial areas, and resolved with intervention by the embassies or communities of the involved workers and/or shows of force by Qatari security forces. Leaders of such disturbances are routinely deported.

Employers set wages unilaterally without government involvement. Local courts handle disputes between workers and employers; however, the majority of foreign workers avoid drawing attention to problems with their employers for fear of repatriation. According to source country embassies and some migrant workers, the Labor Department was widely perceived to be objective within its narrow mandate when dealing with the nonpayment of wages. The Labor Department claimed that it resolves the vast majority of worker complaints amicably, with a very small percentage referred to the labor courts for judgment.

A secretariat for labor relations is charged with overseeing collective bargaining and labor relations. The Labor Inspection Section has been restructured and staffed with sufficient numbers of trained inspectors who are provided with the power of law enforcement. Some labor camps have been closed and forced to comply with minimum standards by the labor inspectors. All expatriate labor must have a Qatari sponsor. Therefore, foreign investors are urged to negotiate labor visa issues with their sponsors/local agents/partners in the early stages of contract negotiation.

In order to bring an expatriate employee into the country, sponsors must submit a request to the Ministry of Labor specifying the employee's nationality and the job he will perform in Qatar. The Ministry of Labor maintains a quota system that restricts the number of workers that may come to Qatar from any particular country.

The Ministry of Interior and the current sponsor must approve all transfers of sponsorship of an expatriate from one individual or firm to another. With the approval of the Ministry of Interior, sponsorship of employees who filed valid complaints of abuse by employers can be transferred without the current employer's agreement, which is very rare.

If the residence permit is canceled, the expatriate is not allowed to return to Qatar on a work visa for a period of two years unless he obtains a letter of no objection from his previous employer. If an employee has been terminated under article 61 of the law, he is barred from reentering the country for four years from the date of his exit.

It is common practice in Qatar for expatriate workers to be provided accommodation, end of service benefits and homeward passage allowance, in addition to salaries. Qatar

does not have a minimum wage regulation, though Qatar's labor agreements with some countries stipulate a minimum wage for certain types of work. The Labor Law does not apply to domestic workers or drivers.

Qatar is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Generally, labor experts believe that Qatar's labor law does not meet ILO minimum requirements. On December 7, 2011 Qatar approved a draft cabinet resolution for establishment of a Constituent Labors Committee. According to the government, the committee will work to make expat laborers aware of their rights and obligations and help protect labor rights in accordance with ILO and International Human Rights Laws.

Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports

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Companies operating at the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) can import goods and services duty free. Foreign entities wishing to invest in the QSTP apply for a license with the Park's managing board. No other licensing rules prevalent in the country will apply to the above businesses, although individuals, contracts and agreements are subject to the criminal and civil laws of the state. Licensed foreign companies can enjoy 100 percent ownership and full capital and income repatriation benefits.

Businesses in the QSTP are exempt from all taxes, including income tax. The property of such a business is not to be seized under any circumstance, but capital and other cash can be seized on the orders of a local court. Equipment, machinery, or any other goods being imported for use by an entity doing business in QSTP are exempt from customs duty, and goods produced in the Park are not subject to export tax.

Goods being sold within Qatar, but outside the QSTP, are subject to the normal customs duty applicable to imported products. Flammable and radioactive materials, drugs, weapons, and explosives are banned from import by any of the licensed entities, unless the licensed entity obtains the necessary permit from the competent governmental authority and a written approval from the QSTP Board.

In addition to the QSTP, Qatar plans to establish three free-trade zones; the first free zone was established in 2006, near the New Doha International Airport, to house light industries, financial services, and legal, trade and engineering consultancies. Development of this zone is still proceeding.

A second zone for the industrial area of Doha will cater to manufacturing and transport companies. The third zone, near Mesaieed Industrial City, will house petrochemical and other downstream-related businesses in the energy sector.

Priority in employment at the zones will be given to Qatari nationals. Resident expatriates will be allowed to join a licensed company if there is no objection from the Ministry of Interior. Conditions governing sponsorship change, including nationality quotas, will not apply to expatriates being recruited by a licensed company provided there is no objection from the Ministry of Interior.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

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The Government of Qatar does not publish detailed statistics for foreign direct investment (FDI) in Qatar or the government's direct investments overseas. However,

Qatar National Bank (QNB) reported the FDI inflows into Qatar in 2009 totaled USD 8.7 billion - the second highest foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in the MENA region, while, FDI outflows totaled USD 3.7 billion in 2009.

The stock of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Qatar was USD 9.2 billion in 2008, up from USD 7.7 billion in 2007. Qatar FDI inward stock was USD 28 billion in 2009 and the FDI outward stock was USD 16 billion in 2009. Qatar liberalized foreign investment in a number of sectors, including consultancy services, information technology, services related to sports, culture and entertainment, and distribution services.

In recent years, Qatar has attracted sizeable investments in the areas of enhanced oil recovery and production, as well as the development of Qatar's gas industry. During the past ten years, QP and its partners have invested an estimated USD 100 billion in upstream and downstream operations. Qatar's North Field, discovered in 1971, is the largest non-associated gas field in the world, with proven reserves estimated at more than 902tn cu ft (tcf), the equivalent of about USD 162 billion barrels of oil. Qatar holds the world's third largest gas reserves after Russia and Iran.

Qatar's 14 LNG trains are based in Ras Laffan Industrial City (RLIC), including six mega trains which produce 7.8 million tonnes each annually, and operated by two companies: Qatargas and RasGas Company Limited. Together, these companies provide Qatar's 77 Mta production capacity. Qatari LNG is now delivered to over 23 markets across four continents. Qatar has a fleet of 54 LNG vessels representing some 20 percent of the world's total LNG fleet. Qatar's gas industry has attracted investors/creditors from the around the world. The following is a list of foreign equity participation investors, U.S. firms included, in some major state-owned industrial/petroleum-related industries:

Exxon-Mobil investment in Qatar is around USD 15 billion and the company currently holds around 10-30 percent stakes in 12 liquefied natural gas production units in Qatar as well as a condensate refinery.

PETROCHEMICALS

Industries Qatar (IQ) 75 percent, Yara Nederland BV 15 percent and Fertilizer Holdings AS 10 percent - Industries Qatar was incorporated in 2003 - Commencement of commercial production: 1974 - Total shareholder equity as end of 2004 was USD 791.5 million - The IQ group companies are:

Qatar Steel Company (QASCO) - incorporated in 1974 as a joint venture between the Qatar government 70 percent and two Japanese companies, Kobe Steel 20 percent and Tokyo Boeki 10 percent), to establish an integrated steel plant.

Qatar Fertilizer Company (QAFCO) - established in 1969 and incorporated in 1975 in a joint venture agreement between the Qatar government and two foreign shareholders. In the same year, the Government transferred its shares to Qatar Petroleum. It is jointly owned by Industries Qatar (IQ) 75 percent, Yara International 25 percent shareholders.

Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) - established in 1974 - Commencement of commercial production: 1981 - as a joint venture between Qatar Petroleum 80 percent and Total Petrochemicals 20 percent. Qatar Petroleum's shares in QAPCO were taken

over by Industries Qatar in 2003 - Equity share capital: QR 360 million (USD 99 million) - Total shareholder equity: USD 777.5 million.

Qatar Fuel Additives Company Ltd. (QAFAC) - incorporated in 1991 - Commencement of commercial production: 2001 - as a joint venture for the construction and operation of a methanol and MTBE production facility - is jointly owned by Industries Qatar (IQ) 50 percent, Chinese Petroleum Corporation (CPC) 20 percent, Lee Chang Yung.

Chemical Industry Corporation (LCYCIC) 15 percent and International Octane Limited 15 percent - Total capital QR 2.5 billion (USD 687 million) - Year established: 1992 - End users: Far East, India, Europe and Arabian Gulf - Total shareholder equity: Unknown.

Qatar Vinyl Company (QVC) is jointly owned by Qatar Petroleum 25.5 percent, QAPCO 31.9 percent and Arkema (a global chemical company and France's leading chemicals producer) 12.9 percent - Year established: 1997 - End-users: Asian countries - Commencement of commercial production: Mid-2001 - Total shareholder equity: Unknown.

Qatar Chemical Company (Q-Chem I): Equity Share Capital: Unknown - Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum (QP) 51 percent; Chevron-Phillips Chemical Company (USA) 49 percent – (ConocoPhillips has collaborated with Qatar Petroleum since 1997 with the establishment of the Q Chem I joint venture) - Year established: 1997 - End-users: Asia, Europe, Middle East and Africa - Commencement of commercial production: 2003 - Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Qatar Chemical Company II (Q-Chem II): Equity Share Capital: Unknown - Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum 51 percent and ChevronPhillips 49 percent (ConocoPhillips participated with Qatar in the Q Chem II and RLOC petrochemical ventures through its 50 percent ownership in ChevronPhillips Chemicals) - Year Established: 2002 - End-users: Local and international - Commencement of commercial production: 2007 - Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Qatofin: Equity Share Capital: Unknown - Shareholders: QAPCO 63 percent, Total Petrochemicals (formally Atofina) 36 percent and QP 1 percent - Year Established: 2002 - End-users: Asia and Europe - Commencement of commercial production: 2007 - Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Ras Laffan Ethylene Cracker: Equity Share Capital: Unknown - Shareholders: Q-Chem II 53.31 percent, Qatofin 45.69 percent and QP 1 percent - Year Established: 2002 - End-users: Domestic - Commencement of commercial production: 2007 - Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Qatar Petroleum (QP) and ExxonMobil Chemical Qatar Limited joint venture to develop one of the world's biggest petrochemical complexes in Ras Laffan Industrial City worth USD 6 billion. The production is destined mainly for the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. The complex would include about a 1.6 million tons per annum steam cracker, 650,000 tons per annum gas phase polyethylene plants, and a 700,000 tons per annum ethylene glycol plant.

The Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Company (QIMC), with a capital base of more than QR 360 million, has equity interests in industries such as chemicals, petrochemicals, construction, aluminum, paper and food processing. The subsidiaries of QIMC are Qatar Metal Coating Company, National Paper Industries Company, Qatar Sand Treatment Plant, Qatar Nitrogen Company, Qatar Paving Stones, National Food Company and Qatar Acids Company. Its business associates are Qatar Jet Fuel Company, Qatar Saudi Gypsum Industries Company, Qatar Clay Bricks Company, Qatar Plastic Production Company, Gulf Formaldehyde Company, Gasal, and Amiantit Qatar Pipes and Qatar Tunisian Food Company.

Qatar Petroleum, via its subsidiary Qatar Intermediate Industries Holding Co (Qatar Holding) is expanding its production capability for petrochemicals with the construction of a new plant in Mesaieed Industrial City (MIC). The new Qatar Petrochemicals Complex (QPCC) will be a multi-billion-dollar (USD 2.6 billion) project developed in a 70:30 partnership between Qatar Holding and Honam Petrochemical Corporation of South Korea. The new petrochemicals complex is scheduled to begin production in 2012.

LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS PROJECTS

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company (Qatargas I): Equity share capital: QR 500 million (USD 137 million). Shareholders: Upstream: Qatar Petroleum (QP) 65 percent, Total (France) 10 percent, Marubeni Corporation (Japan) and Mitsui and Company Ltd. (Japan) 7.5 percent each and ExxonMobil Oil (USA) 10 percent. Shareholders: Downstream: Qatar Petroleum 65.0 percent, Total 20.0 percent, ExxonMobil 10.0 percent, Mitsui 2.5 percent, Marubeni 2.5 percent. Year established: 1984. End-users of LNG: main Markets are Japan and Spain. Commencement of commercial production: December 1996. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown. The production capacity of Qatargas I was 6Mta and increased to 10 million tons after the process of de-bottlenecking.

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company (Qatargas II): Equity share capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Train 4 (capacity of 7.8 mtpa): Qatar Petroleum 70 percent and ExxonMobil 30 percent. Train 5 (capacity of 7.8 mtpa): Qatar Petroleum 65 percent and ExxonMobil 18.3 percent and Total 16.7 percent. Year Established: 2002. End-users: United Kingdom's gas market Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company (Qatargas III) - (Train 6 - capacity of 7.8 mtpa): Equity Share Capital: USD 5 billion; Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum (QP) 68.5 percent and ConocoPhillips 30 percent (ConocoPhillips' upstream collaboration (with Qatar) has been since 2003 through the development of Qatargas 3, a large- scale LNG project at Ras Laffan with a capacity of 7.8 million tons per year (tpy) and Mitsui & Co. Ltd 1.5 percent. Year Established: 2003. End-users: Europe, Asia and the United States. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company (Qatargas IV) - (Train 7 - capacity of 7.8 mtpa) is the last of the 7.8 million tpy mega trains constructed by Qatargas in Ras Laffan. Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum 70 percent and Royal Dutch Shell plc (30 percent). Qatargas 3 and Qatargas 4 supply LNG to Europe, Asia and the United States. Established: 2005

Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Co. (RasGas I) – owns Trains 1 and 2: Equity share capital: QR 7.28 billion (USD 2 billion). Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum (QP) 63 percent,

Mobil QM Gas Inc. 25 percent, Itochu Corporation 4 percent, Nissho Iwai Corporation 3 percent and KOGAS 5 percent. Year established: 1993. End-users of LNG: South Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS 91 percent, Spain 6 percent and the U.S. 3 percent. Commencement of commercial production: 1999. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Co. (RasGas II) - owns Trains 3, 4 and 5: Equity Share Capital: USD 550 million. Shareholders: QP 70 percent and ExxonMobil 30 percent. Year Established: 2001. End-users: India, Edison Gas of Italy, Distrigas of Belgium and Endesa of Spain. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Co. (RasGas III - owns Trains 6 and 7): The investment in Ras Laffan Industrial City, the hub of Qatar's upstream industry, reached USD 70.0 billion in 2009. Equity Share: Unknown. Capital: USD 12-14 million. Shareholders: QP 70 percent stake and ExxonMobil 30 percent. Year Established: 2005. End-users: United States and Asian market. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown

GAS-TO-LIQUIDS PROJECTS

Oryx GTL Project: Equity Share Capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum 51 percent and Sasol 49 percent. Year Established: 2003. End-users: Singapore, Japan and Europe. Commencement of commercial production: 2007. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Pearl GTL Project: Equity Share Capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum 51 percent and Royal Dutch Shell Group 49 percent. Year Established: 2004. Commencement of commercial production: 2011. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

OTHER GAS PROJECTS

Dolphin Gas Project: Equity Share Capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Mubadala Development Company (Abu Dhabi) 51 percent, Occidental Petroleum of the U.S. 24.5 percent, Total of France 24.5 percent, End-users: UAE and Oman. Commencement of commercial production: 2007. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Al-Khaleej Gas Project: Equity Share Capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum, ExxonMobil. Year Established: 2000. End-users: Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain. Commencement of commercial production: Unknown. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Barzan Gas Project: Qatar Petroleum (QP) completed a USD 10.4 billion financing of its Barzan gas project mid December 2011. The Barzan gas project will be completed in two phases. Train 1 is expected to be operational in 2014 and Train 2 in 2015. Rasgas will develop and operate the project on behalf of its Qatar Petroleum and ExxonMobil, which have a 93 percent and 7 percent stake in the project respectively. The project aims to satisfy local demand for natural gas. The project will supply natural gas to power generation and water desalination plants as well as small- and medium-sized industries in Qatar.

OTHER OIL AND GAS-BASED INDUSTRIES

Gulf International Drilling: Equity Share Capital: USD 258 million. Shareholders: Qatar Petroleum 60 percent and JDC 40 percent. Year Established: 2004. End-users: TBD. Commencement of commercial operations: 2004. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

POWER AND UTILITIES

Ras Laffan Independent Water and Power Project: Equity Share Capital: USD572 million. Shareholders: AES Corporation 55 percent, Qatar Electricity and Water Company 25 percent, Qatar Petroleum 10 percent and Gulf Investment Corporation 10 percent. Year Established: 2001. End-users: Local. Commencement of commercial production: 2004. Current value of foreign equity: Unknown.

Q Power Company: Equity Share Capital: Unknown. Shareholders: Qatar Electricity & Water Co. - 55 percent, International Power Plc (UK) - 40 percent Chubu Electric Power Company (Japan) 5 percent.

[1] Zakat is an obligation in Islam for Islamic individuals and corporations to donate a certain portion of their wealth to charitable causes

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Contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy at:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

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Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing

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- [How Does the Banking System Operate](#)
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How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment) [Return to top](#)

Standard Letters of Credit processed by local banks and corresponding banks in the exporting countries control almost all import transactions. In accordance with QCB policy, merchants in Qatar make use of the credit facilities provided by banks to facilitate their imports. Letters of Credit are the safest means of payment that protect the rights of the Qatari importer and the foreign exporter.

Qatari companies also use other methods of payment such as advanced payment and “open accounts” via banks, but these options all depend on the relationship established with the foreign principal.

Banks in Qatar also provide short-term overdrafts and loans to their customers and issue Performance Bonds, Bid Bonds and Advance Payment guarantees on behalf of their customers to support local contracting activities. They can also facilitate foreign exchange transactions and most banks are able to structure basic derivatives such as Interest Rate Swaps to hedge interest rate risk.

Opening an account in Qatar is usually subject to “Know Your Customer” and Anti-Money Laundering due diligence common in developed countries, requiring proof of identity and ascertaining the source of funds. Cash is more widely used in local commercial transactions compared to some western countries. However, checks are also a common method of payment, especially for larger sums. It is important to note that a ‘bounced’ check is a criminal offence in Qatar and can attract stiff penalties including a prison sentence for the account holder.

To date, there is no factoring company in Qatar. Also there is no credit rating agency in Qatar.

How Does the Banking System Operate [Return to top](#)

There are a total of nine local banks operating in Qatar: Ahlibank, Al Khaliji Bank, Barwa Bank, Commercial Bank of Qatar, Doha Bank, International Bank of Qatar, Qatar Development Bank, Qatar Islamic Bank, and Qatar National Bank. Seven foreign banks also work in the local market: HSBC, Mashreq Bank, Arab Bank, BNP Paribas,

Standard Chartered Bank, United Bank and Bank Saderat Iran. The Qatari banking sector is dominated by Qatar National Bank (QNB, 50% state-owned), which is the oldest and largest Qatari bank and has over 40% share of the banking sector's total assets as of 2007. QNB is followed by Commercial Bank with 16% of assets and Doha Bank with 11%.

Additionally, the Qatar Financial Centre, established in 2005 to attract international banks, law firms and insurance companies to Qatar by offering a streamlined and modern regulatory framework, has so far attracted over 80 institutions, including a branch of Citibank N.A. offering Corporate and Investment Banking services (no retail banking), and investment banks such as Goldman Sachs. Other banks in QFC include Credit Suisse, Bank Audi and Arab Jordanian Investment Bank. Institutions residing in the QFC are regulated by the Qatar Financial Centre Regulatory Authority (QFCRA).

Qatar Central Bank (QCB) supervises all banks, financial institutions and exchange houses in Qatar outside the QFC. In addition to its normal responsibilities, which include issuance/redemption of Qatar's currency, control of monetary policy and monitoring of the banking system, QCB requires all banks to meet the standards of the Bank of International Settlement (BIS), a council of worldwide central bank governors. Most banks in Doha have maintained a comfortable capital adequacy ratio above the 8 percent level required by the BIS. This is a ratio between total equity plus reserves and total risk weighed assets, i.e., loans and investments of a bank not including loans to the GOQ.

The GOQ ensures that the banking sector continues to enjoy depositors' confidence, despite the fact that no deposit insurance exists. QCB also ensures that annual financial statements of all banks operating in Qatar comply with international standards and that the auditing process is carried out by internally recognized auditors. QCB requires that auditors be changed every three or four years.

The banking sector in Qatar has grown very rapidly over the past few years on the back of a robust economy with high rates of GDP growth. From 2005-2008, total assets of the banking sector grew at a compounded average growth rate (CAGR) of almost 47% whereas loans grew by 48% during the same period.

Foreign-Exchange Controls

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The Qatari Riyal (QR) is fixed to the U.S. Dollar (USD) at USD 1:00 = QR 3.64. Qatar has no restrictions on foreign exchange and money transfer. However, some restrictions exist when transferring in excess of QR 100,000 (USD 27,472), as well as in cases where suspicion of money laundering calls for official intervention.

U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks

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Ahlibank

Bank of America, New York, NY

Union Bank of California International, New York, NY

Commercial Bank

American Express Bank, New York, NY

	First Union Bank International, New York, NY The Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, NY Citibank, New York, NY
Doha Bank	Doha Bank, New York, NY
International Bank of Qatar	Standard Chartered Bank, New York, NY
International Islamic	Dutch Bankers Trust, New York, NY Wachovia Bank, New York, NY
Qatar Islamic Bank	American Express Bank, New York, NY JP Morgan Chase Bank, New York, NY Wachovia Bank, New York Int'l Branch, New York, NY
Qatar National Bank	JP Morgan Chase Bank, New York, NY

Project Financing [Return to top](#)

Commercial banks in Qatar, both local and foreign, are the main source of financing for individuals and companies operating locally. In 2007, personal / retail loans accounted for the largest share of domestic loans at 32%, followed by the Public Sector at 25% and Land, Housing and Construction at 19%. Trade-related loans were relatively modest at 12%. These figures, however, do not capture the large project financing facilities raised by the State of Qatar in the international loans and bonds markets over the years to finance the massive gas infrastructure.

Commercial banks actively provide long-term financing for local projects, based on the merit of each proposal. U.S. firms interested in seeking financing for projects or local operations in Qatar should enquire with the leading banks in Qatar. An easier route may be to enquire with international banks with branches in Qatar, either in QFC or outside, with whom the borrower may already have a relationship overseas.

Established in 1997, state-owned Qatar Industrial Development Bank (QIDB) encourages industrial and economic development and diversification of the State of Qatar through financing small to medium sized joint venture industrial projects. In addition to financing, QIDB provides assistance with project development, including project assessments and feasibility studies, obtaining legal documentation and government approvals.

U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) participated in the finance package for the RasLaffan Liquefied Natural Gas Company. Other U.S. firms are encouraged to seek Ex-Im Bank financing for industrial projects, medical, environmental and transportation security initiatives, and major construction projects.

Due to concerns about labor practices in Qatar, OPIC suspended its operations in Qatar in 1995. However, Qatar is working diligently to improve its labor standards in order to reinstate OPIC coverage. In May 2004, Qatar passed a new labor law which provides more rights and protections for Qataris and non-Qataris.

In August 1998, the Qatar Central Bank decreed that banks operating in Qatar are not allowed to provide loans more than 20 percent of their equity (capital plus reserves) to a single customer (the government excluded). The QCB also discourages local banks from financing stock market operations.

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Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>

Country Limitation Schedule: http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html

OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>

Trade and Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov/>

SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit/>

USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/cc/default.htm>

U.S. Agency for International Development: <http://www.usaid.gov>

Qatar Financial Center: www.qfc.com.qa

Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority: www.qfcra.com

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Business Customs

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U.S. citizens should expect to have meetings in the morning or evening. The ability to say a few Arabic greetings or words will impress Qatari contacts. Always use the right hand when shaking hands and eating. Do not show the palms of your hands or the soles of your feet/shoes. Be prepared for small talk and then business discussion. Always accept tea, coffee or other refreshments during meetings. Invitations to lunch, dinner, receptions and other hospitalities are normally offered and should always be accepted. Dress should be business attire. It is advisable to print business cards with one side in English and the other side in Arabic. It is advisable to have at least a temporary local or international mobile phone. Giving gifts depends on the closeness of the relationship but it is advisable to not give gifts during the first meeting.

Travel Advisory

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The State Department Consular Information Sheet for Qatar is available at:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1003.html

Visa Requirements

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All travelers to Qatar should have passports valid for at least six months. It is best to obtain Qatari visas in advance from the Qatari Embassy in Washington, DC, the Qatari Consulate in Houston, Texas, or the Qatari Mission to the United Nations in New York. Qatari Embassies in other countries also provide this service to foreign nationals. Four passport-sized photographs, a visa application and a letter from the sponsor in Qatar should be submitted for this purpose. A sponsorship letter, however, is not always a basic requirement. This procedure usually takes at least four working days. The U.S. and the Qatari governments have a reciprocal arrangement by which Qatar issues U.S. businessmen a multiple-entry visa for 10 years. This type of entry visa does not entitle visitors and/or businessmen to work in Qatar, unless it is exchanged for a residence permit. A U.S. Citizen is entitled to a multiple entry visa valid for 10 years. However, the

maximum length of stay in the country is 6 months after which the holder of the visa must leave the country. The application for a multiple entry visa must be made to a Qatari Diplomatic mission outside Qatar. The visa is valid for business and tourism purposes.

Tourist visas valid for 14 days, extendable for another 14 days, are available upon arrival for nationals of 33 different countries (USA , Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Ireland, Greece, Finland, Spain, Monaco, Vatican, Iceland, Andorra, San Marino, Liechtenstein, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea). A 14 day visa costs QR 55 (\$15). Foreigners with valid residence permits from other Gulf Cooperation Council countries do not require a visitor's visa. Upon arrival to Qatar they will be granted an entry visa valid for 14 days, provided the residence permit stamped on their passports would be valid for at least one month.

However, U.S. businesspersons are advised to obtain a visa prior to arrival, since it will enable them to go through Qatari immigration more quickly.

The same visa can also be obtained online at the following link:

[Business Visa](#)

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

United States Visas.gov: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

Telecommunications

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Qatar enjoys good local and international telecommunications facilities. Automatic telephone and fax dialing is available to more than 150 countries worldwide. Internal calls are free of charge if conducted through regular telephones. U.S. calling cards are not accepted in Qatar.

Prepaid cellular (mobile) phones may be rented locally for a small fee. There are charges for all calls made to and from mobile telephones. "World phones" do not provide reliable local service.

Qatar's Internet service is run by partially state-owned Qatar Telecom (Q-Tel). In 2003, Q-Tel introduced ADSL high-speed internet access. Most hotels offer in-room Internet access and there are a number of Internet cafes in Doha. In 2005, Q-Tel introduced wireless internet services. Hotspots are available in several hotels and trendy coffee-shops of Doha.

Transportation

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Transportation options for business travelers are basically limited to car rentals or private taxi. Most major international rental firms are represented in Qatar, including Avis, Budget, Eurodollar, Hertz, Thrifty, etc. Private cars and drivers can be hired from a number of local firms and at hotels. In 2005, Mowasalat (Transportation in Arabic), a wholly owned government entity, launched the first public bus service in Qatar. Taxi service is operated by a sister company called Karwa. The service is not always reliable or on time for pick-ups, and bookings should be made in advance (local number 458-8888). It is usually not possible to hail a taxi in Doha, even in high traffic areas. All 4 and 5 star hotels can also arrange transportation via private vehicle.

Language

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Although Arabic is the official language in Qatar, English is widely spoken in business.

Health

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Qatari nationals receive free State-provided medical care ranging from outpatient clinics to hospitalization. Medical fees for expatriate residents holding a government health card vary according to the type of service provided. The price of a health card is QR 100 (USD 27) and is only valid in governmental health care facilities. While medicines are generally dispensed free of charge for Qatari patients, expatriates pay a nominal charge. Visitors to Qatar are required to pay for all medical services throughout their visit to Qatar.

There are numerous private clinics and small hospitals, all licensed by the State through the National Health Authority (NHA).

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

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Qatar local time is GMT plus 3 hours. Qatar is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, except during Daylight Saving Time, when it is 7 hours ahead.

The Government's official working hours are 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM, Sunday through Thursday. Banking hours are 8:00 AM to 1:30 PM, Sunday through Thursday, while private sector hours are generally 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM and 4:00 PM to 7:30 PM, Saturday through Thursday. Friday, the Muslim holy day, is a day of rest for all sectors; however, shops and shopping malls are open on Friday evenings. The U.S. Embassy hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Sunday through Thursday.

Officially, Qatar uses the Gregorian calendar, with corresponding dates in the Hijra (Islamic) calendar. There are two major religious holidays that vary from year to year, as they are based on the lunar calendar. Eid Al-Fitr marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan (during which business hours are restricted to five hours per day) and Eid Al-Adha marks the conclusion of the pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca. The exact dates of these holidays are determined by the government shortly in advance of their observance. Government ministries are generally closed for a longer period than private and partially

private entities. The only fixed holiday is the Qatar's National Day, which is celebrated on December 18.

The months from October through June are generally considered the best period for foreign business representatives to visit Qatar. Public and private sector officials usually vacation during some part of the period July to September. Business trips during the fasting month of Ramadan are not advisable as most Qatari businessmen focus on family and worship.

The U.S. Embassy closes for Qatari and American Holidays.
Embassy schedule: <http://qatar.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings [Return to top](#)

Most standard business equipment for individual use may be brought into Qatar temporarily without incurring customs duties. Exhibition materials may be imported for temporary use. However, if these items are sold in Qatar, customs duties will be applicable. Exhibition organizers generally appoint an exclusive local freight forwarder and clearing agent for specific events to assist foreign exhibitors with entry procedures.

Communications, military or security equipment may require prior approval from the relevant authority in Qatar.

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[State Department Consular Information Sheet for Qatar](#)
[Travel Info for U.S. Businesspersons](#)
[State Department Visa Website](#)
[United States Visas.gov](#)
[U.S. Embassy Qatar Consular Section](#)
[Qatar E-Government On-line Visa](#)
[Qatar Telecom](#)

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Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research and Trade Events

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Contacts

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Note: The country code for Qatar is 974 for all telephone and fax numbers. There are no area codes within Qatar.

Bilateral Business Councils

American Arab Chamber of Commerce
12740 West Warren, Suite 101
Dearborn, MI 48126 USA
Phone: (313) 945-1700
Fax: (313) 945-6697
Contact: Fay Beydoun, Executive Director
Email: sbazzi@americanarab.com, faybeydoun@americanarab.com
Website: www.americanarab.com

U.S.-Qatar Business Council
1341 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 4A
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 457-8555
Fax: (202) 457-1919
Contact: Patrick Theros, President
Email: patricktheros@usqbc.org
Website: www.usqbc.org

National U.S. -Arab Chamber of Commerce
1023 15th Street, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 289-5920
Fax: (202) 289-5938
President: Mr. David Hamod
Email: INFO@NUSACC.ORG
Website: www.nusacc.org

Branch Offices of National U.S. -Arab Chamber of Commerce:

Houston Office
1330 Post Oak Boulevard
Suite 1600
Houston, TX 77056
Phone: (713) 963-4620

Fax: (713) 963-4609
Contact: Ms. Rand Zalzal
E-mail: rzalzal@nusacc.org
Website: www.nusacc.org

New York Office
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 2034
New York, NY 10170
Tel: (212) 986-8024
Fax: (212) 986-0216
Contact: Mr. Gilbert Hage
E-mail: ghage@nusacc.org
Website: www.nusacc.org

Los Angeles Office
8921 S. Sepulveda Boulevard, Suite 206
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Phone: (310) 646-1499
Fax: (310) 646-2462
E-mail: eatallah@nusacc.org
Website: www.nusacc.org

Bilateral U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce
5721 Memorial Dr. Suite 206
Houston, TX US 77007
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 571870
Houston, TX US 77257-1870
Phone: 713-880-8168
Fax: 713-880-8278
Contact: Aida Araissi, Founder and Managing Director
Email: info@arabuschamber.org, aida@bilateralchamber.org
Website: www.bilateralchamber.org/

USDA -- Washington Contact Information

Trade Assistance and Promotion Office (TAPO)
Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Ag Box 1052
1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250
Tel: 202-720-7420
Fax: 202-690-4374
The FAS Home Page address on Internet is www.fas.usda.gov

Country Trade or Industry Associations in Key Sectors

Qatar Chamber of Commerce & Industry (QCCI, also include International Chamber of Commerce)
P.O. Box 402, Doha, Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4455 9111
Fax: (+974) 4466 1693; 4466 1728

Contact: Mr Khalifa Bin Jassim Bin Mohammed Al Thani, Chairman
Email: info@qcci.org, qcci@qatar.net.qa
Website: www.qatarchamber.com

Qatari Businessmen Association
P.O. Box 24475, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4435 3120
Fax: (+974) 4435 3834 / 4435 3847
Contact: Mr Faisal Bin Qasem Al Thani, Chairman
Email: qba@qataribusinessmen.org
Website: <http://www.qataribusinessmen.org/>

Country Government Offices Relating to Key Sectors and/or Significant Trade Related Activities

Doha Customs and Ports Authority –
P.O. Box 81, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4445 7457
Fax: (+974) 4441 4959
Contact: Mr Ahmad Ali Mohammad Al Mohannadi, Chairman
Email: questions@customs.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.customs.gov.qa>

Civil Aviation Authority
P.O. Box 3000, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4455 7333
Fax: (+974) 4455 7105
Contact: Mr Abdulaziz Al-Noaimi, Chairman & Managing Director
Email: info@caa.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.caa.gov.qa/>

Ministry of Business and Trade
P.O. Box 1968, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4494 5001, 4494 5555
Fax: (+974) 4494 5000
Contact: Mr Hamad Ali Al-Mannai, The Minister's Office Manager
Email: mbt@mbt.gov.qa / halmannai@mbt.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.investinqatar.com.qa/English/Pages/Home.aspx>

Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology
P.O. Box 23277
Tel: (+974) 4413 9400 / 4413 9401
Fax: (+974) 4413 9411
Contact: Mr Mohamed Seif Al-Kuwari, Director General
Email: info@qs.org.qa / dr.malkuwari@qs.org.qa

Ministry of Finance -
P.O. Box 83, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4441 4944
Fax: (+974) 4443 1177 / 4443 5370
Contact: H.E. Yousef Hussain Kamal, Minister;

Abdulrahman Al-Dashti, Office Director
Phone: (974) 4441 3300/3131
Fax: (974) 4443 1177

Ministry of Energy and Industry
P.O. Box 3212, Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4484 6444 / 4449 1444
Fax: (+974) 4483 2024
Contact: H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Minister
Website: <http://www.mei.gov.qa/home-en/>

Department of Industrial Development:
(+974) 4484 6444 | did@mei.gov.qa

Department of Industrial Zones:
(+974) 4423 4111 | dihe@mei.gov.qa

Department of Common Services:
(+974) 4484 6444 | djs@mei.gov.qa

Department of Energy
(+974) 4484 6444 | dae@mei.gov.qa

Public Relations and Communications Unit
(+974) 4484 6577 | relation@mei.gov.qa

Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 2433, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4433 0000
Fax: (+974) 4472 7828
Contact: H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalid Al-Thani, Minister of Interior
Email: info@moi.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.moi.gov.qa/site/english/>

Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning
P.O. Box 22332, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4434 8070 / 4434 8888
Fax: (+974) 4443 0239
Contact: H.E. Sheikh Abdul Rahman Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Minister of Municipality and Urban Planning
Email: info@baladiya.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.baladiya.gov.qa/cui/index.dox?siteID=2>

Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning
P.O. Box 1966, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4465 3083
Fax: (+974) 4466 3163
Contact: Dr. Kassim Al Qahtani, Assistant Director for Animal Health Affairs, Agricultural Development Department (Live animal and pet import regulations)

Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning

P.O. Box 1966, Doha, State of Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4449 2666
Fax: (+974) 4432 2002
Contact: Mr. Yousuf Qulaifi, Director of Agricultural Development Department (Live plants and pesticide import regulations)

Supreme Council of Health
P.O. Box 42, Doha, Qatar
Tel: (+974) 4407 0000
Contact: H.E. Abdulla bin Khalid Al-Qahtani, Minister of Public Health and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Health
Email: info@sch.gov.qa
Website: <http://www.sch.gov.qa/sch/En/catcontent.jsp?scatId=211&scatType=1>

Qatar Armed Forces
P.O. Box 37, Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4461 2400
Fax: (+974) 4450 4228/4229
Contact: Director of Procurement, General Headquarters

Government and Quasi-Government Organizations

Hamad General Hospital, A Member of Hamad Medical Corporation
P.O. Box 3050, Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4439 4444
Fax: (974) 4439 1118
Contact: Mr Abdul Razaq Al-Kubaisi, Head of Admin Affairs
Website: <http://hgh.hamad.qa/en/index.aspx>

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development
P.O. Box 5825, Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4454 0000
Fax: (+974) 4480 6117
Contact: HH Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, Chairperson; Dr Mohammad Fathy Saoud, President of Qatar Foundation
Email: info@qf.org.qa
Website: <http://www.qf.org.qa>

Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa)
P.O. Box 41
Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4484 5555
Fax: (+974) 4484 5496
Contact: H.E. Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Chairman of the Board
Email: contactus@km.com.qa
Website: <http://www.km.com.qa/en/Pages/home.aspx>

Qatar Electricity and Water Company (QEWCo)
P.O. Box 22046
Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4485 8585

Fax: (+974) 4483 1116
Contact: H.E. EssaShaheen Al-Ghanim, Vice Chairman
Email: Welcome@qewc.com
Website: <http://www.qewc.com>

Qatar Telecom (Q-Tel)
P.O. Box 217
Doha, State of Qatar
Phone: (+974) 4440 0400
Fax: (+974) 4447 6231
Contact: Dr. Nasser Marafih, Chief Executive Officer
Email: investor@qtel.com.qa
Website: <http://www.qtel.com.qa>

Market Research

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To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov/mrktresearch/index.asp> and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required, and is free.

List of Agricultural Reports:

- American Food Directory for the GCC-5 Countries
- Guide for Doing Business in the Gulf
- Update of U.S. Agricultural Exports to the GCC-5
- Qatar Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS)
- GCC-5 Food Retail Sector Report
- Hotels and Restaurants Sector in the Gulf Region

Note: Agricultural reports are available via the Reports Office, USDA/FAS, Ag Box 1052, Washington, D.C. 20250-1052 and via the FAS Home Page on the Internet at the following URL: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/>.

Trade Events

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Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events.

<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents/index.asp>

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Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The President's National Export Initiative aims to double exports over five years by marshaling Federal agencies to **prepare U.S. companies to export successfully, connect them with trade opportunities** and **support them once they do have exporting opportunities**.

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help U.S. exporters, particularly small and medium sized businesses, successfully expand exports to new markets. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers
- Gain access to the full range of U.S. government trade promotion agencies and their services, including export training and potential trade financing sources

To learn more about the Federal Government's trade promotion resources for new and experienced exporters, please click on the following link: www.export.gov

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers to U.S. exporters, please click on the following link:

<http://export.gov/qatar/>

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information can also contact the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at **(800) USA-TRAD(E)**.

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.

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